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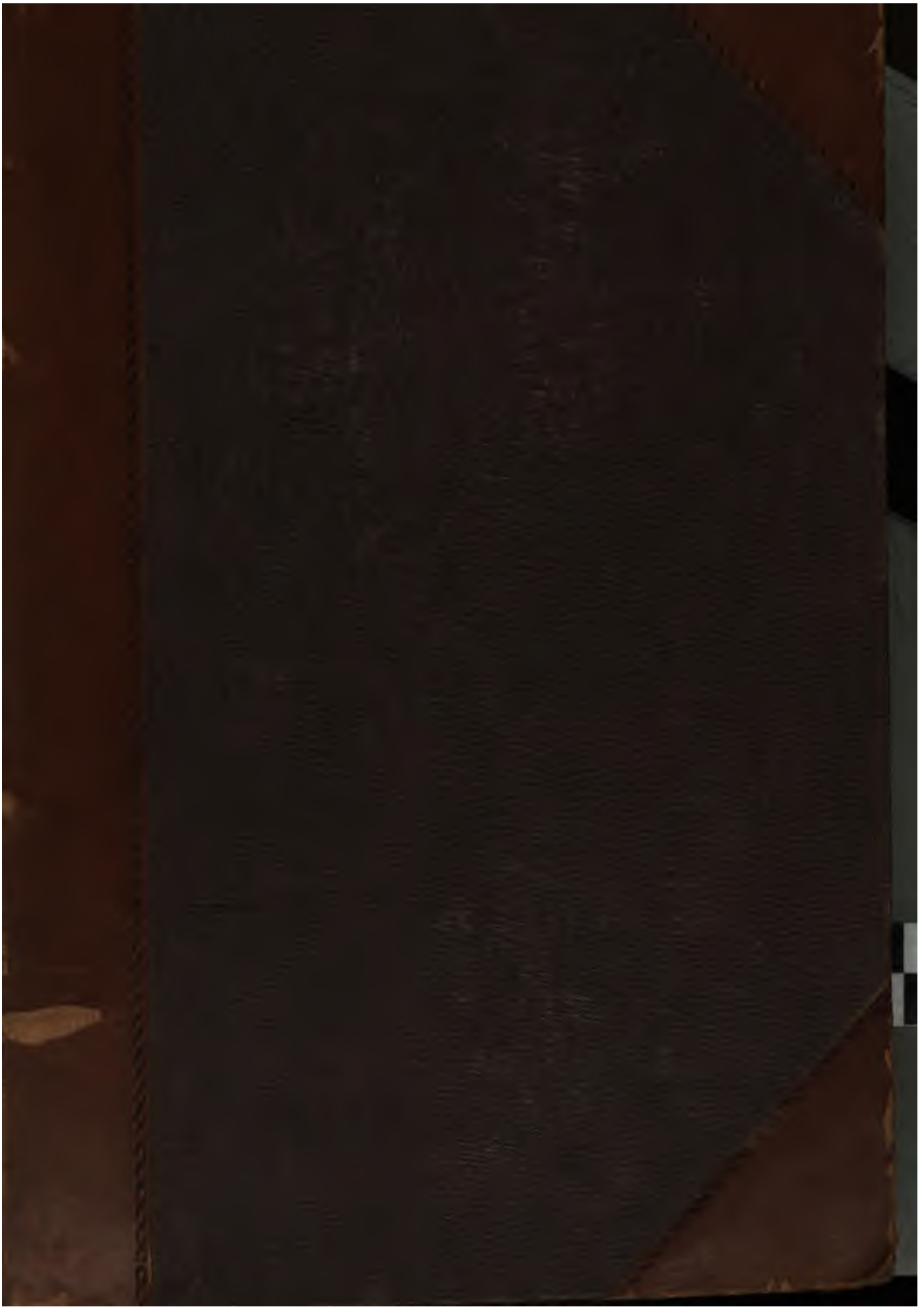

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THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAPIS-FRANC.*

It was on a cold and rainy night, towards the end of October 1838, that a tall and powerful man, with an old broad-brimmed straw hat upon his head, and clad in a blue cotton carter's frock, which hung loosely over trousers of the same material, crossed the Pont au Change, and darted with a hasty step into the *Cité*, that labyrinth of obscure, narrow, and winding streets which extends from the Palais de Justice to Notre Dame.

Although limited in space, and carefully watched, this quarter serves as the lurking-place, or rendezvous, of a vast number of the very dregs of

* *Tapis-franc*; literally, a "free carpet;" a low haunt equivalent to what in English slang is termed "a boozing ken."

society in Paris, who flock to the *tapis-franc*. This word, in the slang of theft and murder, signifies a drinking-shop of the lowest class. A returned convict, who, in this foul phraseology, is called an *ogre*, or a woman in the same degraded state, who is termed an *ogress*, generally keep such "cribs," frequented by the refuse of the Parisian population;—freed felons, thieves, and assassins, are there familiar guests. If a crime is committed, it is here, in this filthy sewer, that the police throws its cast-net, and rarely fails to catch the criminals it seeks to take.

On the night in question, the wind howled fiercely in the dark and dirty gulleys of the Cité: the blinking and uncertain light of the lamps which swung to and fro in the sudden gusts were dimly reflected in pools of black slush, which flowed abundantly in the midst of the filthy pavement.

The murky-coloured houses, which were lighted within by a few panes of glass in the worm-eaten casements, overhung each other so closely, that the eaves of each almost touched its opposite neighbour, so narrow were the streets. Dark and noisome alleys led to staircases still more black and foul, and so perpendicular, that they could hardly be ascended by the help of a cord fixed to the dank and humid walls by holdfasts of iron.

Stalls of charcoal-sellers, fruit-sellers, or venders of refuse meat, occupied the ground-floor of some of these wretched abodes. Notwithstanding the small value of their commodities, the front of nearly all these shops were protected by strong bars of iron,—a proof that the shopkeepers knew and dreaded the gentry who infested the vicinity.

The man of whom we have spoken, having entered the Rue aux Fèves, which is in the centre of the Cité, slackened his pace: he felt he was on his *own soil*. The night was dark, and strong gusts of wind, mingled with rain, dashed against the walls. Ten o'clock struck by the distant dial of the Palais de Justice. Women were huddled together under the vaulted arches, deep and dark, like caverns; some hummed popular airs in a low key; others conversed together in whispers; whilst some, dumb and motionless, looked on mechanically at the wet, which fell and flowed in torrents. The man in the carter's frock, stopping suddenly before one of these creatures, silent and sad as she gazed, seized her by the arm, and said, "Ha! good evening, *La Goualeuse*."*

The girl receded, saying, in a faint and fearful tone, "Good evening, *Chourineur*.† Don't hurt me."

This man, a liberated convict, had been so named at the hulks.

"Now I have you," said the fellow; "you must pay me the glass of 'tape' (*eau d'aff*), or I'll make you dance without music," he added, with a hoarse and brutal laugh.

"Oh, Heaven! I have no money," replied Goualeuse, trembling from head to foot, for this man was the dread of the district.

"If you're *stumped*, the ogress of the *tapis-franc* will give you *tick* for your pretty face."

"She won't; I already owe her for the clothes I'm wearing."

* Sweet-throated; in reference to the tone of her voice.
† One who strikes with the knife; the stabber, or slasher.

"What, you want to shirk it?" shouted the Chourineur, darting after La Goualeuse, who had hid herself in a gulley as mirk as midnight.

"Now, then, my lady, I've got you!" said the vagabond, after groping about for a few moments, and grasping in one of his coarse and powerful hands a slim and delicate wrist; "and now for the dance I promised you."

"No, it is *you* who shall dance!" was uttered by a masculine and deep voice.

"A man! Is't you, Bras Rouge? Speak; why don't you? and don't squeeze so hard. I am here in the entrance to your 'ken,' and you it must be."

"'Tis not Bras Rouge!" said the voice.

"Oh! isn't it? Well, then, if it is not a friend, why, here goes at you," exclaimed the Chourineur. "But whose bit of a hand is it I have got hold of?—it must be a woman's!"

"It is the fellow to this," responded the voice.

And under the delicate skin of this hand, which grasped his throat with sudden ferocity, the Chourineur felt himself held by nerves of iron. The Goualeuse, who had sought refuge in this alley, and lightly ascended a few steps, paused for an instant, and said to her unknown defender, "Thanks, sir, for having taken my part. The Chourineur said he would strike me because I could not pay for his glass of brandy; but I think he only jested. Now I am safe, pray let him go. Take care of yourself, for he is the Chourineur."

"If he be the Chourineur, I am a bully boy who never knuckles down," exclaimed the unknown.

All was then silent for a moment, and then was heard for several seconds, in the midst of the pitchy darkness, sounds of a fierce struggle.

"Who the devil is this?" then said the ruffian, making a desperate effort to free himself from his adversary, whose extraordinary power astonished him. "Now, then, now you shall pay both for La Goualeuse and yourself!" he shouted, grinding his teeth.

"Pay! yes, I will pay you, but it shall be with my fists; and it shall be cash in full," replied the unknown.

"If," said the Chourineur, in a stifled voice, "you do but let go my neckcloth, I will bite your nose off."

"My nose is too small, my lad, and you hav'nt light enough to see it."

"Come under the 'hanging glim'* there.

"That I will," replied the unknown, "for then we may look into the whites of each other's eyes."

He then made a desperate rush at the Chourineur, whom he still held by the throat, and forced him to the end of the alley, and then thrust him violently into the street, which was but dimly lighted by the suspended street-lamp. The bandit stumbled; but, rapidly recovering his feet, he threw himself furiously upon the unknown, whose slim and graceful form appeared to belie the possession of the irresistible strength he had displayed. After a struggle of a few minutes, the Chourineur, although of athletic build, and a first-rate champion in a species of pugilism vulgarly termed the *savate*, found that he had got what they call his *master*. The unknown threw him twice with immense dexterity, by what is called, in wrestling, the leg-pass, or crook. Unwilling, however, to acknowledge the superiority of his adversary, the Chourineur, boiling with rage, returned again to the charge. Then the defender of La Goualeuse, suddenly altering his mode of attack, rained on the head and face of the bandit a shower of blows with his closed fist, as hard and heavy as if stricken by a steel gauntlet. These blows, worthy of the admiration of Jem Belcher, Dutch Sam, Tom Cribb, or any other celebrated English pugilist, were so entirely different from the system of the *savate*, that the Chourineur dropped like an ox on the pavement, exclaiming, as he fell, "I'm floored" (*Mon linge est lavé*)!

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* have pity on him!" exclaimed La Goualeuse, who, during the contest, had ventured on the threshold of the alley, adding, with an air of astonishment, "But who are you, then? Except the *Schoolmaster* and *Skeleton*, there is no one, from the Rue Saint Eloi to Notre Dame, who can stand against the Chourineur. I thank you, very, very much, sir, for, indeed, I fear that without your aid he would have beaten me."

The unknown, instead of replying, listened with much attention to the voice of this girl. Perhaps a tone more gentle, sweet, and silvery, never fell on human ear. He endeavoured to examine the features of La Goualeuse; but the night was too dark, and the beams of the street-lamp too flickering and feeble. After remaining for some minutes quite motionless, the Chourineur shook his legs and arms, and then partly rose from the ground.

"Pray be on your guard!" exclaimed the Goualeuse, retreating again into the dark passage, and taking her champion by the arm; "take care, or he will have his revenge on you."

"Don't be frightened, my child; if he has not had enough, I have more ready for him."

The brigand heard these words.

"Thanks," he murmured; "I'm half throttled, and one eye is closed—that is quite enough for one day. Some other time, perhaps, when we may meet again ——"

* Under the lamp, called *reverbère*.

"What! not content yet—grumbling still?" said the unknown, with a menacing tone.

"No, no—not at all; I do not grumble in the least. You have regularly served me out—you are a lad of mettle," said the Chourineur, in a coarse tone, but still with that sort of deference which physical superiority always finds in persons of his grade. "You are the better man, that's clear. Well, except the *Skeleton*, who seems to have bones of iron, he is so thin and powerful, and the *Schoolmaster*, who could eat three Hercules for his breakfast, no man living could boast of having put his foot on my neck."

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, now I have found my master, that's all; you will find yours some day, sooner or later—every body does. One thing, however, is certain; now that you are a better man than the Chourineur, you may 'go your length' in the Cité. All the women will be your slaves; ogres and ogresses will give you credit, if it is only for fear; you may be a king in your way! But who and what are you? You *patter flash* like a family man! If you are a 'prig,' I'll have nothing do with you. I have used the knife, it is true, because, when the blood comes into my eyes, I see *red*, and I must strike, in spite of myself; but I have paid for my *slashing*, by going to the hulks for fifteen years. My time is up, and I am free from surveillance. I can now live in the capital, without fear of the 'beaks;' and I have never prigged—have I, La Goualeuse?"

"No, he was never a thief," said the girl.

"Come along, then, and let us have a glass of something together, and I'll tell you who I am," said the unknown. "Come, don't let us bear malice."

"Bear malice!—devil a bit! You are master—I confess it. You do know how to handle your fists; I never knew any thing like it. Thunder and lightning! how your thumps fell on my sconce—I never felt any thing like it. Yours is a new game, and you must teach it to me."

"I will recommence whenever you like."

"Not on me, though, thank ye—not on me," exclaimed the Chourineur, laughing, "your blows fell as if from a sledge-hammer; I am still giddy from them. But do you know Bras Rouge, in whose passage you were?"

"Bras Rouge?" said the unknown, who appeared disagreeably surprised at the question; adding, however, with an indifferent air, "I do not know Bras Rouge. Is he the only person who inhabits this abode? It rained in torrents, and I took shelter in the alley. You meant to beat this poor girl, and I have thrashed you—that's all."

"You're right; I have nothing to do with your affairs. Bras Rouge has a room here, but does not occupy it often. He is usually at his *estaminet* in the Champs Elysées. But what's the good of talking about him?" Then, turning to the Goualeuse, "On my word, you are a good wench, and I would not have beaten you; you know I would not harm a child—it was only my joke. Never mind; it was very good of you not to set on this friend of yours against me when I was down, and at his mercy. Come and drink with us; he pays for all. By the way, my trump," said he, to the unknown, "what say you, instead of going to tipple, shall we go and have a crust for supper with the ogress at the White Rabbit? It is a *tapis-franc*."

"With all my heart. I will pay for the supper. You'll come with us, Goualeuse?" inquired the unknown.

"Thanks, sir," she replied, "but, after having seen your struggle, it has made my heart beat so that I have no appetite."

"Pooh! pooh! one shoulder of mutton pokes the other down," said the Chourineur; "the cookery at the White Rabbit is first-rate."

The three personages then, in perfect amity, bent their steps together toward the tavern.

During the contest between the Chourineur and the unknown, a charcoal-seller, of huge size, ensconced in another passage, had contemplated with much anxiety the progress of the combat, but without attempting to offer the slightest assistance to either antagonist. When the unknown, the Chourineur, and the Goualeuse, proceeded to the public-house, the charcoal-man followed them.

The beaten man and the Goualeuse first entered the *tapis-franc;* the unknown was following, when the charcoal-man accosted him, and said in a low voice, in the German language, and in a most respectful tone of remonstrance, "Pray, *your highness*, be on your guard."

The unknown shrugged his shoulders, and rejoined his new companion. The charcoal-dealer did not leave the door of the cabaret, but listened attentively, and gazed from time to time through a small hole which had been accidentally made in the thick coat of whitening with which the windows of such haunts as these are usually covered on the inside.

CHAPTER II.

THE OGRESS.

The White Rabbit is situated in the centre of the Rue aux Fêves. This tavern occupies the ground-floor of a lofty house, the front of which is formed by two windows, which are styled "a *guillotine*." Hanging from the front of the door leading to a dark and arched passage, was an oblong lamp, on the cracked panes of which were written, in red letters, "*Nightly Lodgings here.*"

The Chourineur, the unknown, and the Goualeuse, entered into a large but low apartment, with the ceiling smoked, and crossed by black rafters, just visible by the flickering light of a miserable suspended lamp. The cracked walls, formerly covered with plaster, were now ornamented in places with coarse drawings, or sentences of flash and obscenity.

The floor, composed of earth beaten together with saltpetre, was thick with dirt; an armful of straw — an apology for a carpet — was placed at the foot of the ogress's counter, which was at the right hand of the door, just beneath the dim lantern.

On each side of this room there were six tables, one end of each of which was nailed to the wall, as well as the benches on either side of them. At the farther end was a door leading to a kitchen; on the right, near the counter, was a passage which led into a den where persons slept for the night at three halfpence a-head.

A few words will describe the ogress and her guests. The lady was called Mother Ponisse; her triple trade consisted in letting furnished apartments, keeping a public-house, and *lending* clothes to the miserable creatures who infest these foul streets.

The ogress was about forty years of age, bulky, fat, and heavy. She had a full colour, and strong symptoms of a beard. Her deep voice, her enormous arms, and coarse hands, betokened uncommon strength. She wore on her cap a large red and yellow handkerchief; a shawl of rabbit-skin was crossed over her bosom, and tied behind: her woollen gown fell upon black wooden shoes, scorched almost black by the small stove at which she warmed her feet; and, to crown her beauty, she had a copper complexion, which the use of strong liquors had materially tended to heighten.

The counter, covered with lead, was decked with jugs with iron hoops, and various pewter measures. In an open cupboard, fastened to the wall, there were several flasks of glass, so fashioned as to represent the pedestrian figure of the Emperor. These bottles contained sundry cordials, red and green in colour, and known by the names of "Drops for the Brave," "Ratafia of the Column," &c. &c.

A large black cat, with green eyes, was sitting near the ogress, and seemed the familiar demon of the place. Then, in strange contrast, a holy branch of boxwood, bought at church by the ogress, was suspended at the back of an old cuckoo-clock.

Two marvellously ill-favoured fellows, with unshaven beards, and their garb all in tatters, hardly tasted of the pitcher of wine before them, and conversed together in low voices, and with uneasy aspect. One of the two, very pale and livid, pulled, from time to time, his shabby skull-cap over his brows, and concealed as much as possible his left hand, and, even when compelled to use it, he did so with caution.

Further on there was a young man, hardly sixteen years of age, with beardless chin, and a countenance wan, wrinkled, and heavy, his eye dull, and his long black hair straggling down his neck. This youthful rake, the emblem of precocious vice, was smoking a short black pipe. His back was resting against the wall, and his two hands were in the pockets of his blouse, and his legs stretched along the bench. He did not cease smoking for a moment, unless it was to drink from a cannakin of brandy placed before him.

The other inmates of the *tapis-franc*, men and women, presented no remarkable characteristics. There was the ferocious or embruted face — the vulgar and licentious mirth; but from time to time there was a deep and dull silence. Such were the guests of the *tapis-franc* when the unknown, the Chourineur, and the Goualeuse, entered.

These three persons play such important parts in our recital, that we must put them in relief.

The Chourineur was a man of lofty stature and athletic make, with hair of a pale brown, nearly white; thick eyebrows, and enormous whiskers of deep red. The sun's rays, misery, and the severe toil of the galleys, had bronzed his skin to that deep and olive hue which is peculiar to convicts. In spite of his horrible nickname, his features did not express ferocity, but a sort of coarse familiarity and irrepressible audacity. We have said already that the Chourineur was clothed in trousers and frock

of blue cotton, and on his head he had one of those large straw hats usually worn by workmen in timber-yards, and barge-emptiers.

The Goualeuse was, perhaps, about sixteen and a half years old. A forehead, of the purest and whitest, surmounted a face of perfect oval and angel-like expression; a fringe of eyelids, so long that they curled slightly, half veiled her large blue eyes, which had a melancholy expression. The down of early youth graced cheeks lightly coloured with a scarlet tinge. Her small and rosy mouth, which hardly ever smiled,—her nose, straight, and delicately chiselled,—her rounded chin,—had, in their combined expression, a nobility and a sweetness, such as we can only find in the most beautiful of Raphael's portraits. On each side of her fair temples was a band of hair, of the most splendid auburn hue, which descended in luxuriant ringlets half way down her cheeks, and were then turned back behind the ear, a portion of which—ivory shaded with carnation—was thus visible, and was then lost under the close folds of a large cotton handkerchief, with blue checks, tied, as it is called, *en marmotte*. Her graceful neck, of dazzling whiteness, was encircled by a small necklace of grains of coral. Her gown, of brown stuff, though much too large, could not conceal a charming form, supple and round as a cane; a worn-out small orange-coloured shawl, with green fringe, was crossed over her bosom.

The lovely voice of the Goualeuse had made a strong impression on her unknown defender, and, in sooth, that voice, so gentle, so deliciously

modulated, and harmonious, had an attraction so irresistible, that the horde of villains and abandoned women, in the midst of whom this unfortunate girl lived, often begged her to sing, and listened to her with rapture.

The Goualeuse had another name, given, doubtless, to the maiden sweetness of her countenance,—she was also called *Fleur-de-Marie*.

The defender of La Goualeuse (we shall call the unknown, Rodolph) appeared about thirty-six years of age; his figure, tall, graceful, and admirably proportioned, yet did not betoken the astonishing vigour which he had displayed in his rencounter with the Chourineur.

It would have been difficult to assign a decided character to the physiognomy of Rodolph. Certain wrinkles in his forehead betokened a man of meditation; and yet the firm expression of his mouth, the dignified and bold carriage of the head, assured us of the man of action, whose physical strength and presence of mind would always command an ascendancy over the multitude.

In his struggle with the Chourineur, Rodolph had neither betrayed anger nor hatred. Confident in his own strength, his address, and agility, he had only shewn a contempt for the brute beast which he subdued.

La Goualeuse.

Rodolph.

We will finish this bodily picture of Rodolph by saying that his features, regularly handsome, seemed too beautiful for a man. His eyes were large, and of a deep hazel, his nose aquiline, his chin rather projecting, his hair bright chestnut, of the same shade as his eyebrows, which were strongly arched, and his small moustache, which was fine and silky. Thanks to the manners and the language which he assumed with so much ease, Rodolph was exactly like the other guests of the ogress. Round his graceful neck, as elegantly modelled as that of the Indian Bacchus, he wore a black cravat, carelessly tied, the ends of which fell on the collar of his blue blouse. A double row of nails decorated his heavy shoes, and, except that his hands were of most aristocratic shape, nothing distinguished him from the other guests of the *tapis-franc;* though, in a moral sense, his resolute air, and, what we may term, his bold serenity, placed an immense distance between them.

On entering the *tapis-franc*, the Chourineur, laying one of his heavy hands on the shoulders of Rodolph, cried, "Hail the conqueror of the Chourineur! Yes, my boys, this springald has floored me; and if any young gentleman wishes to have his ribs smashed, or his '*nob in Chancery*,' even including the Schoolmaster and the Skeleton, here is their man; I will answer for him, and back him!"

At these words, all present, from the ogress to the lowest ruffian of the *tapis-franc*, contemplated the victor of the Chourineur with respect and fear. Some, moving their glasses and jugs to the end of the table at which they were seated, offered Rodolph a seat, if he were inclined to sit near them; others approached the Chourineur, and asked him, in a low voice, for the particulars of this unknown, who had made his entrance into their *world* in so striking a manner.

Then the ogress, accosting Rodolph with one of her most gracious smiles,—a thing unheard-of, and almost deemed fabulous, in the annals of the White Rabbit,—rose from the bar to take the orders of her guest, and know what he desired to have for the refreshment of his party—an attention which she did not evince either to the Schoolmaster or the Skeleton, two fearful ruffians, who made even the Chourineur tremble.

One of the men with the villanous aspect, whom we have before described as being very pale, hiding his left hand, and continually pulling his cap over his brows, leaned towards the ogress, who was carefully wiping the table where Rodolph had taken his seat, and said to her, in a hoarse tone, "Hasn't the Gros-Boiteux been here to-day?"

"No," said Mother Ponisse.

"Nor yesterday?"

"Yes, he came yesterday."

"Was Calebasse with him—the daughter of Martial, who was guillotined? You know whom I mean—the Martials of the *Ile de Ravageur?*"

"What! do you take me for a spy, with your questions? Do you think I watch my customers?" said the ogress, in a brutal tone.

"I have an appointment to-night with the Gros-Boiteux and the Schoolmaster," replied the fellow; "we have some business together."

"That's your affair—a set of ruffians, as you are, altogether."

"Ruffians!" said the man, much incensed, "it is such ruffians you get your living by."

"Will you hold your jaw?" said the Amazon, with a threatening gesture, and lifting, as she spoke, the pitcher she held in her hand.

The man resumed his place, grumbling as he did so.

"The Gros-Boiteux has, perhaps, stayed to give that young fellow Germain, who lives in the Rue du Temple, his gruel," said he, to his companion.

"What, do they mean to *do* for him?"

"No, not quite, but to make him more careful in future. It appears he has 'blown the gaff' in the job at Nantes, so Bras Rouge declares."

"Why, that is Gros-Boiteux' affair; he has only just left prison, and has his hands full already."

Fleur-de-Marie had followed the Chourineur into the tavern of the ogress, and he, responding to a nod given to him by the young scamp with the jaded aspect, said, "Ah! Barbillon, what, pulling away at the old stuff?"

The Chourineur.

"Yes: I would rather fast, and go barefoot any day, than be without my *drops* for my throttle, and the *weed* for my pipe," said the rapscallion, in a thick, low, hoarse voice, without moving from his seat, and puffing out volumes of tobacco-smoke.

"Good evening, Fleur-de-Marie," said the ogress, looking with a prying eye on the clothes of the poor girl—clothes which she had lent her. After her scrutiny, she said, in a tone of coarse satisfaction, "It's really a pleasure—so it is—to lend one's good clothes to you: you are as clean as a kitten, or else I would never have trusted you with that shawl. Such a beauty as that orange one is, I would never have trusted it to such gals as *Tourneuse* and *Boulotte*; but I have taken every care *on* you ever since you came here six weeks ago; and, if the truth must be

said, there is not a tidier nor more nicer gal than you in all the Cité; that there aint; though you be al'ays so sad like, and too particular."

The Goualeuse sighed, turned her head, and said nothing.

"Why, mother," said Rodolph to the old hag, "you have got some holy box-wood, I see, over your cuckoo;" and he pointed with his finger to the consecrated bough behind the old clock.

"Why, you heathen, would you have us live like dogs?" replied the ogress. Then, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, she added, "Come, now, Goualeuse, tip us one of your pretty little ditties" (*goualantes*).

"Supper, supper first, Mother Ponisse," said the Chourineur.

"Well, my lad of wax, what can I do for you?" said the ogress to Rodolph, whose good-will she was desirous to conciliate, and whose support she might, perchance, require.

"Ask the Chourineur; he orders, I pay."

"Well, then," said the ogress, turning to the bandit, "what will you have for supper, you 'bad lot'?"

"Two quarts of the best wine, at twelve sous, three crusts of wheaten bread, and a *harlequin*,"* said the Chourineur, after considering for a few moments what he should order.

"Ah! you are a dainty dog, I know, and as fond as ever of them *harlequins*."

"Well, now, Goualeuse," said the Chourineur, "are you hungry?"

"No, Chourineur."

"Would you like any thing better than a *harlequin*, my lass?" said Rodolph.

"No, I thank you, I have no appetite."

"Come, now," said the Chourineur, with a brutal grin, "look my *master* in the face like a jolly wench. You have no objection, I suppose?"

The poor girl blushed, and did not look at Rodolph. A few moments afterwards, and the ogress herself placed on the table a pitcher of wine, bread, and a *harlequin*, of which we will not attempt to give an idea to the reader, but which appeared most relishing to the Chourineur; for he exclaimed, "*Dieu de Dieu!* what a dish!—what a glorious dish! it is a regular omnibus; there is something in it to every body's taste. Those who like fat can have it; so can they who like lean; as well as those who prefer sugar, and those who choose pepper. There's tender bits of chicken, biscuit, sausage, tarts, mutton-bones, pastry crust, fried fish, vegetables, woodcocks' heads, cheese, and salad. Come, eat, Goualeuse, eat; it is so capital! You have been to a wedding-breakfast somewhere this morning."

"No more than on other mornings. I ate this morning, as usual, my ha'porth of milk, and my ha'porth of bread."

The entrance of another personage into the cabaret interrupted all conversation for a moment, and every body turned his head in the direction of the new comer, who was a middle-aged man, active, and powerful, wearing a loose coat and cap. He was evidently quite at home in the

* A "harlequin" is a collection of odds and ends of fish, flesh, and fowl, after they come from table, which the Parisian, providing for the class to which the Chourineur belongs, finds a profitable and popular composition.

tapis-franc, and, in language familiar to all the guests, requested to be supplied with supper. He was so placed, that he could observe the two ill-looking scoundrels who had asked after Gros-Boiteux and the Schoolmaster. He did not take his eyes off them; but, in consequence of their

position, they could not see that they were the objects of such marked and constant attention.

The conversation, momentarily interrupted, was resumed. In spite of his natural audacity, the Chourineur shewed a deference for Rodolph, and abstained from familiarity.

"By Jove," said he to Rodolph, "although I have smarted for it, yet I am very glad to have met with you."

"What! because you relish the *harlequin?*"

"Why, may be so; but more because I am all on the fret to see you 'serve out' the Schoolmaster. To see him who has always crowed over me, crowed over in his turn would do me good."

"Do you suppose, then, that for your amusement, I mean to spring at the Schoolmaster, and pin him like a bull-dog?"

"No, but he'll have at you in a moment, when he learns that you are a better man than he," replied the Chourineur, rubbing his hands.

"Well, I have coin enough left to pay him in full," said Rodolph, in a careless tone; "but it is horrible weather: what say you to a cup of brandy with sugar in it?"

"That's the ticket!" said the Chourineur.

"And, that we may be better acquainted, we will tell each other who we are," added Rodolph.

"The Albinos called the Chourineur a freed convict, worker at the wood that floats at St. Paul's Quay; frozen in the winter, scorched in the summer, from twelve to fifteen hours a-day in the water; half man, half frog; that's my description," said Rodolph's companion, making him a military salute with his left hand. "Well, now, and you, my master, this is your first appearance in the Cité. I don't mean any thing to offend;

but you entered head foremost against my skull, and beating the drum on my carcase. By all that's ugly, what a rattling you made, especially with these blows with which you doubled me up! I never can forget them—thick as buttons—what a torrent! But you have some trade besides 'polishing off' the Chourineur?"

"I am a fan-painter, and my name is Rodolph."

"A fan-painter! ah! that's the reason, then, that your hands are so white," added the Chourineur. "If all your fellow-workmen are like you, there must be a tidy lot of you. But as you are a workman, what brings you to a *tapis-franc* in the Cité, where there are only prigs, cracksmen, or freed convicts like myself, and who only come here because we cannot go elsewhere? This is no place for you. Honest mechanics have their coffee-shops, and don't talk slang."

"I come here because I like good company."

"Gammon!" said the Chourineur, shaking his head with an air of doubt. "I found you in the passage of Bras Rouge. Well, man, never mind. You say you don't know him?"

"What do you mean with all your nonsense about your Bras Rouge. Let him go to the ——"

"Stay, master of mine. You, perhaps, distrust me; but you are wrong; and if you like I will tell you my history; but that is on condition that you teach me how to give those precious thumps which settled my business so quickly. What say you?"

"I agree, Chourineur; tell me your story, and Goualeuse will also tell hers."

"Very well," replied the Chourineur; "it is not weather to turn a mangy cur out of doors, and it will be an amusement. Do you agree, Goualeuse?"

"Oh, certainly; but my story is a very short one," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"And you will have to tell us your history, Comrade Rodolph," added the Chourineur.

"Well, then, I'll begin."

"Fan-painter!" said Goualeuse, "what a very pretty trade!"

"And how much can you earn if you stick close to work," inquired the Chourineur.

"I work by the piece," responded Rodolph; "my good days are worth three francs, sometimes four, in summer, when the days are long."

"And you are idle, sometimes, you rascal?"

"Yes, as long as I have money, though I do not waste it. First, I pay ten sous for my night's lodging."

"Your pardon, *Monseigneur*, you sleep, then, at ten sous, you do?" said the Chourineur, raising his hand to his cap.

The word *Monseigneur*, spoken ironically by the Chourineur, caused an almost imperceptible smile on the lips of Rodolph, who replied, "Oh, I like to be clean and comfortable."

"Here's a peer of the realm for you! a man with mines of wealth!" exclaimed the Chourineur; "he pays ten sous for his bed!"

"Well, then," continued Rodolph, "four sous for tobacco; that makes fourteen sous; four sous for breakfast, eighteen; fifteen sous for dinner;

one or two sous for brandy; that all comes to about thirty-four or thirty-five sous a-day. I have no occasion to work all the week, and so the rest of the time I amuse myself."

"And your family?" said the Goualeuse.

"Dead," replied Rodolph.

"Who were your friends?" asked the Goualeuse.

"Dealers in old clothes and marine stores under the pillars of the market-place."

"How did you spend what they left you?" inquired the Chourineur.

"I was very young, and my guardian sold the stock; and, when I came of age, he brought me in his debtor for thirty francs; that was my inheritance."

"And who is now your employer?" the Chourineur demanded.

"His name is Gauthier, in the Rue des Bourdonnais, a beast—brute—thief—miser! he would almost as soon lose the sight of an eye as pay his workmen. Now this is as true a description as I can give you of him: so let's have done with him. I learned my trade under him from the time when I was fifteen years of age; I have a good number in the Conscription, and my name is Rodolph Durand. My history is told."

"Now, it's your turn, Goualeuse," said the Chourineur; "I keep my history till last, as a *bonne bouche*."

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF LA GOUALEUSE.

"LET us begin at the beginning," said the Chourineur.

"Yes. Your parents?" added Rodolph.

"I never knew them," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"The deuce!" said the Chourineur. "Well, that is odd, Goualeuse! you and I are of the same family."

"What! you, too, Chourineur?"

"An orphan of the streets of Paris like you, my girl."

"Then who brought you up, Goualeuse?" asked Rodolph.

"I don't know, sir. As far back as I can remember—I was, I think, about six or seven years old—I was with an old one-eyed woman, whom they call the *Chouette*,* because she had a hooked nose, a green eye quite round, and was like an owl with one eye out."

"Ah! ah! ah! I think I see her, the old night-bird!" shouted the Chourineur, laughing.

"The one-eyed woman," resumed Fleur-de-Marie, "made me sell barley-sugar in the evenings on the Pont Neuf: but that was only an excuse for asking charity; and when I did not bring her in at least ten sous, the Chouette beat me instead of giving me any supper."

"Are you sure the woman was not your mother?" inquired Rodolph.

"Quite sure: for she often scolded me for being fatherless and motherless, and said she picked me up one day in the street."

"So," said the Chourineur, "you had a dance instead of a meal, if you did not pick up ten sous?"

* The Screech-owl.

"Yes. And after that I went to lie down on some straw spread on the ground; when I was cold—very cold."

"I do not doubt it, for the feather of beans (straw) is a very cold sort of stuff," said the Chourineur. "A dung-heap is twice as good; but then people don't like your smell, and say, 'Oh, the blackguard! where has he been?'"

This remark made Rodolph smile, whilst Fleur-de-Marie thus continued:—"Next day the one-eyed woman gave me a similar allowance for breakfast as for supper, and sent me to Montfauçon to get some worms to bait for fish; for in the day-time the Chouette kept her stall for selling fishing-lines, near the bridge of Notre Dame. For a child of seven years of age, who is half-dead with hunger and cold, it is a long way from the Rue de la Mortellerie to Montfauçon."

"But exercise has made you grow as straight as an arrow, my girl: you have no reason to complain of that," said the Chourineur, striking a light for his pipe.

"Well," said the Goualeuse, "I returned very, very tired; then, at noon, the Chouette gave me a little bit of bread."

"Ah, eating so little has kept your figure as fine as a needle, girl: you must not find fault with that," said the Chourineur, puffing out a cloud of tobacco-smoke. "But what ails you, comrade?—I mean, Master Rodolph. You seem quite down like: are you sorry for the girl and her miseries? Ah, we all have, and have had, our miseries!"

"Yes, but not such miseries as mine, Chourineur," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"What not I, Goualeuse? Why, my lass, you were a queen to me! At least, when you were little you slept on straw and ate bread: I passed my most comfortable nights in the lime-kilns at Clichy, like a regular vagabond; I fed on cabbage-stumps and other refuse vegetables, which I picked up when and where I could: but very often, as it was so far to the lime-kilns at Clichy, and I was tired after my work, I slept under the large stones at the Louvre; and then, in winter, I had white sheets—that is, whenever the snow fell."

"A man is stronger: but a poor little girl——" said Fleur-de-Marie. "And yet, with all that, I was as plump as a skylark."

"What! you remember that, eh?"

"To be sure I do. When the Chouette beat me I fell always at the first blow; then she stamped upon me, screaming out, 'Ah, the nasty little brute! she hasn't a farden's worth of strength—she can't stand even two thumps!' And then she called me Pegriotte (little thief): I never had any other name—that was my baptismal name."

"Like me. I had the baptism of a dog in a ditch, and they called me 'Fellow,' or 'You, sir,' or 'Albinos.' It is really surprising, my wench, how much we resemble each other!" said the Chourineur.

"That's true—in our misery," said Fleur-de-Marie, who addressed herself to the Chourineur almost always feeling, in spite of herself, a sort of shame at the presence of Rodolph, hardly venturing to raise her eyes to him, although in appearance he belonged to that class with whom she ordinarily lived.

"And when you had fetched the worms for the Chouette, what did you do?" inquired the Chourineur.

"Why, she made me beg until night: then, in the evening, she went to sell fried fish on the Pont Neuf. Oh, dear! at that time it was a long while to wait for my morsel of bread; and if I dared to ask the Chouette for something to eat, she beat me and said, 'Get ten sous, and then you shall have your supper.' Then I, being very hungry, and as she hurt me very much, cried with a very full heart and sore body. The Chouette tied my little basket of barley-sugar round my neck, and stationed me on the Pont Neuf, where, in winter, I was frozen to death. Yet sometimes, in spite of myself, I slept as I stood; but not long: for the Chouette kicked me until I awoke. I remained on the bridge till eleven o'clock, my stock of barley-sugar hanging round my neck, and often crying heartily. The passengers, touched by my tears, sometimes gave me a sous; and then I gained ten and sometimes fifteen sous, which I gave to the Chouette, who searched me all over, and even looked in my mouth, to see if I had kept back any thing."

"Well, fifteen sous was a good haul for a little bird like you."

"It was. And then the one-eyed woman seeing that——"

"With her one eye?" said the Chourineur, laughing.

"Of course, because she had but one. Well, then, she finding that when I cried I got most money, always beat me severely before she put me on the bridge."

"Brutal, but cunning."

"Well, at last I got hardened to blows; and as the Chouette got in a passion when I did not cry, why I, to be revenged upon her, the more she thumped me the more I laughed, although the tears came into my eyes with the pain."

"But, poor Goualeuse, did not the sticks of barley-sugar make you long for them?"

"Ah, yes, Chourineur; but I never tasted them. It was my ambition, and my ambition ruined me. One day, returning from Montfauçon, some little boys beat me and stole my basket. I came back, well knowing what was in store for me; and I had a shower of thumps and no bread. In the evening, before going to the bridge, the Chouette, savage because I had not brought in any thing the evening before, instead of beating me as usual to make me cry, made me bleed by pulling my hair from the sides of the temples, where it is most tender."

"*Tonnerre!* that was coming it too strong," said the bandit, striking his fist heavily on the table, and frowning sternly. "To beat a child is no such great thing, but to ill-use one so—— Heaven and earth!"

Rodolph had listened attentively to the recital of Fleur-de-Marie, and now looked at the Chourineur with astonishment: the display of such feeling quite surprised him.

"What ails you, Chourineur?" he inquired.

"What ails me?—ails me? Why, have you no feeling? That devil's dam of a Chouette who so brutally used this girl! Are you as hard as your own fists?"

"Go on, my girl," said Rodolph to Fleur-de-Marie, without appearing to notice the Chourineur's appeal.

"I have told you how the Chouette ill-used me to make me cry. I was then sent on to the bridge with my barley-sugar. The one-eyed was at her usual spot, and from time to time shook her doubled fist at me.

However, as I had not broken my fast since the night before, and as I was very hungry, at the risk of putting the Chouette in a passion I took a piece of barley-sugar, and began to eat it."

"Well done, girl!"

"I ate another piece——"

"Bravo! go it, my hearties!"

"I found it so good, not from daintiness but real hunger. But then a woman, who sold oranges, cried out to the one-eyed woman, 'Look ye there, Chouette; Pegriotte is eating the barley-sugar!'"

"Oh, thunder and lightning!" said the Chourineur; "that would enrage her—make her in a passion! Poor little mouse, what a fright you were in when the Chouette saw you—eh?"

"How did you get out of that affair, poor Goualeuse?" asked Rodolph, with as much interest as the Chourineur.

"Why, it was a serious matter to me; but that was afterwards: for the Chouette, although boiling over with rage at seeing me devour the barley-sugar, could not leave her stove, for the fish was frying."

"Ah! ah! ah! True, true—that was a difficult position for her," said the Chourineur, laughing heartily.

"At a distance the Chouette threatened me with her long iron fork, but when her fish was cooked she came towards me. I had only collected three sous, and I had eaten six sous' worth. She did not say a word, but took me by the hand and dragged me away with her. At this moment, I do not know how it was that I did not die on the spot with fright. I remember it as well as if it was this very moment—it was very near to New-year's day, and there were a great many shops on the Pont Neuf, all filled with toys, and I had been looking at them all the evening with the greatest delight—beautiful dolls, little furnished houses: you know how very amusing such things are for a child."

"You had never had any playthings, had you, Goualeuse?" asked the Chourineur.

"I? *Mon Dieu!* who was there to give me any playthings?" said the girl, in a sad tone. "Well, the evening passed. Although it was in the depth of winter, I only had on a little cotton gown, no stockings, no shift, and with wooden shoes on my feet: that was not enough to stifle me with heat, was it? Well, when the old woman took my hand I burst out into a perspiration from head to foot. What frightened me most was that, instead of swearing and storming as usual, she only kept on grumbling between her teeth. She never let go my hand, but made me walk so fast—so very fast—that I was obliged to run to keep up with her, and in running I had lost one of my wooden shoes; and as I did not dare to say so, I followed her with one foot naked on the bare stones. When we reached home it was covered with blood."

"A one-eyed old devil's kin!" said the Chourineur, again thumping the table in his anger. "It makes my heart quite cold to think of the poor little thing trotting along beside that cursed old brute, with her poor little foot all bloody!"

"We lived in a garret in the Rue de la Montellerie: beside the entrance to our alley there was a dram-shop, and there the Chouette went in, still dragging me by the hand. She then had a half-pint of brandy at the bar."

"The deuce! Why I could not drink that without being quite fuddled!"

"It was her usual quantity: perhaps that was the reason why she beat me of an evening. Well, at last we got up into our cock-loft; the Chouette double-locked the door; I threw myself on my knees, and asked her pardon for having eaten the barley-sugar. She did not answer me, but I heard her mumbling to herself as she walked about the room, 'What shall I do this evening to this little thief, who has eaten all that barley-sugar? Ah, I see!' And she looked at me maliciously with her one green eye. I was still on my knees, when she suddenly went to a shelf and took down a pair of pincers."

"Pincers!" exclaimed the Chourineur.

"Yes, pincers."

"What for?"

"To strike you?" inquired Rodolph.

"To pinch you?" said the Chourineur.

"No, no," answered the poor girl, trembling at the very recollection.

"To pull out your hair?"

"No: to take out one of my teeth."

The Chourineur uttered a blasphemous oath, accompanied with such furious imprecations, that all the guests in the *tapis-franc* looked at him with astonishment.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Rodolph.

"The matter! the matter! I'll skin her alive, that infernal old hag! if I can catch her. Where is she?—tell me, where is she? Let me find her, and I'll throttle the old——"

"And did she really take out your tooth, my poor child—that wretched monster in woman's shape?" demanded Rodolph, whilst the Chourineur was venting his rage in a volley of the most violent reproaches.

"Yes, sir; but not at the first pull. How I suffered! She held me with my head between her knees, where she held it as if in a vice. Then, half with her pincers, half with her fingers, she pulled out my

tooth, and then said, 'Now I will pull out one every day, Pegriotte; and when you have not a tooth left I will throw you into the river, and the fish shall eat you.'"

"The old devil! to break and pull out a poor child's teeth in that way!" exclaimed the Chourineur, with redoubled fury.

"And how did you escape her, then?" inquired Rodolph of the Goualeuse.

"Next day, instead of going to Montfauçon, I went on the side of the Champs Elysées, so frightened was I of being drowned by the Chouette. I would have run to the end of the world, rather than be again in the Chouette's hands. After walking and walking I fairly lost myself: I had not begged a farthing, and the more I thought the more frightened did I become. At night I hid myself in a timber-yard, under some piles of wood. As I was very little, I was able to creep under an old door and hide myself amongst a heap of logs. I was so hungry that I tried to gnaw a piece of the bark, but I could not bite it—it was too hard. At length I fell asleep. In the morning, hearing a noise, I hid myself still further back in the wood-pile. It was tolerably warm, and if I had had something to eat, I could not have been better off for the winter."

"Like me in the lime-kiln."

"I did not dare to quit the timber-yard, for I fancied that the Chouette would seek for me every where to pull out my teeth and drown me, and that she would be sure to catch me if I stirred from where I was."

"Stay, do not mention that old beast's name again—it makes the blood come into my eyes! The fact is, that you have known misery—bitter, bitter misery. Poor little mite! how sorry I am that I threatened to beat you just now, and frightened you. As I am a man, I did not mean to do it."

"Why, would you not have beaten me? I have no one to defend me."

"That's the very reason, because you are not like the others—because you have no one to take your part, that I would not have beaten you. When I say, no one, I do not mean our comrade Rodolph; but his coming was a chance, and he certainly did give me my full allowance when we met."

"Go on, my child," said Rodolph. "How did you get away from the timber-yard?"

"Next day, about noon, I heard a great dog barking under the wood-pile. I listened, and the bark came nearer and nearer; then a deep voice exclaimed, 'My dog barks—somebody is hid in the yard!' 'They are thieves,' said another voice; and the men then began to encourage the dog, and cry, 'Find 'em! find 'em, lad!' The dog ran to me, and, for fear of being bitten, I began to cry out with all my might and main. 'Hark!' said one of them: 'I hear the cry of a child.' They called back the dog; I came out from the pile of wood and saw a gentleman and a man in a blouse. 'Ah, you little thief! what are you doing in my timber-yard?' said the gentleman, in a cross tone. I put my hands together and said, 'Don't hurt me, pray: I have had nothing to eat for two days, and I've run away from the Chouette, who pulled

out my tooth, and said she would throw me over to the fishes. Not knowing where to sleep, I was passing before your door and I slept for the night amongst these logs, under this heap, not thinking I hurt any body.'"

"'I'm not to be gammoned by you, you little hussey! You came to steal my logs. Go and call the watch,' said the timber-merchant to his man."

"Ah, the old vagabond! the old reprobate! Call the watch! Why didn't he send for the artillery?" said the Chourineur. "Steal his logs, and you only eight years old! What an old ass!"

"'Not true, sir,' his man replied. 'Steal your logs, master! How can she do that? She is not so big as the smallest piece!' 'You are right,' replied the timber-merchant: 'but if she does not come for herself, she does for others. Thieves have a parcel of children, whom they send to pry about and hide themselves to open the doors of houses. She must be taken to the commissary, and mind she does not escape.'"

"Upon my life, this timber-merchant was more of a log than any log in his own yard," said the Chourineur.

"I was taken to the commissary," resumed Goualeuse. "I accused myself of being a wanderer, and they sent me to prison. I was sent before the Tribunal, and sentenced, as a rogue and vagabond, to remain until I was sixteen years of age in a house of correction. I thank the judges much for their kindness; for in prison I had food, I was not beaten, and it was a paradise after the cock-loft of the Chouette. Then, in prison I learned to sew; but—sad to say!—I was idle: I preferred

singing to work, and particularly when I saw the sun shine. Ah! when the sun shone on the walls of the prison I could not help singing; and

then, when I could sing, I seemed no longer to be a prisoner. It was after I began to sing so much that they called me *Goualeuse*, instead of

Pegriotte. Well, when I was sixteen I left the gaol. At the door I found the ogress here, and two or three old women, who had come to see

my fellow-prisoners, and who had always told me that when I left the prison they would find work for me."

"Yes, yes, I see," said the Chourineur.

"'My pretty little maid,' said the ogress and her old companions, 'come and lodge with us: we will give you good clothes, and then you may amuse yourself.' I didn't like them, and refused, saying to myself, 'I know how to sew very well, and I have two hundred francs in hand. I have been eight years in prison, I should like to enjoy myself a bit—that won't hurt any body: work will come when the money is spent.' And so I began to spend my two hundred francs. Ah! that was my mistake," added Fleur-de-Marie, with a sigh. "I ought first to have got my work: but I hadn't a soul on earth to advise me. At sixteen to be thrown on the city of Paris, as I was, one is so lonely; and what is done is done. I have done wrong, and I have suffered for it. I began then to spend my money: first, I bought flowers to put in my room—I do love flowers! then I bought a gown, a nice shawl, and I took a walk in the Bois de Boulogne, and I went to St. Germains, Vincennes, and other country places. Oh, how I love the country!"

"With a lover by your side, my girl?" asked the Chourineur.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* no! I like to be my own mistress. I had my little excursions with a friend who was in prison with me—a good little girl as can be: they call her *Rigolette*, because she is always laughing."

"Rigolette! Rigolette! I don't know her," said the Chourineur, who appeared to be appealing to his memory.

"I didn't think you knew her! I am sure Rigolette was very well behaved in prison, and always so gay and so industrious, she took out with her when she left the prison at least four hundred francs that she had earned. And then she is so particular!—you should see her! When I say I had no one to advise me, I am wrong: I ought to have listened to her: for, after having had a week's amusement together, she said to me, 'Now we have had such a holyday, we ought to try for work, and not spend our money in waste.' I, who was so happy in the fields and the woods—it was just at the end of spring, this year—I answered, 'Oh, I must be idle a little longer, and then I will work hard.' Since that time I have not seen Rigolette, but I heard a few days since that she was living near the Temple—that she was a famous needlewoman and earned at least twenty-five sous a-day, and has a small workroom of her own: but now I could not for the world see her again—I should die with shame if I met her."

"So, then, my poor girl," said Rodolph, "you spent your money in the country—you like the country, do you?"

"Like it? I love it! Oh! what would I not give to live there? Rigolette, on the contrary, prefers Paris, and likes to walk on the Boulevards; but she is so nice and so kind, she went into the country only to please me."

"And you did not even leave yourself a few sous to live upon whilst you found work?" said the Chourineur.

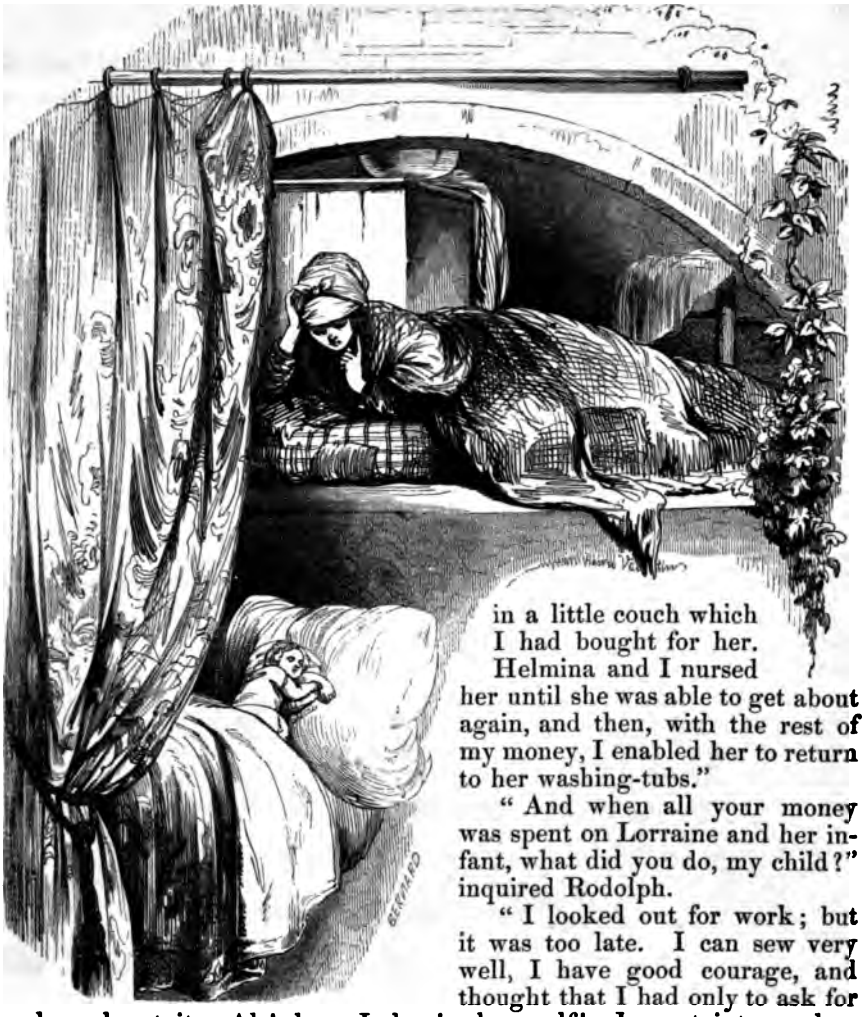
"Yes, I had reserved about fifty francs; but it happened that I had for my washerwoman a woman called Lorraine, a poor thing, with none but the good God to protect her. She was then very near her confine-

ment, and yet was obliged all day long to be with her hands and feet in her washing-tubs. She fell sick, and, not being able to work, applied for admittance to a lying-in hospital, but there was no room. She could not work, and her time was very near at hand, and she had not a sous to pay for the bed in a garret, from which they drove her. Fortunately, she met one day, at the end of the Pont Notre-Dame, with Goubin's wife, who had been hiding for four days in a cellar of a house which was being pulled down behind the Hôtel Dieu——"

"But why was Goubin's wife hiding?"

"To escape from her husband, who threatened to kill her; and she only went out at night to buy some bread, and it was then she met with the poor Lorraine, ill, and hardly able to drag herself along, for she was expecting to be brought to bed every hour. Well, it seems this Goubin's wife took her to the cellar where she was hiding—it was just a shelter, and no more. There she shared her bread and straw with the poor Lor-

raine, who was confined in this cellar of a poor little infant,—her only covering and bed was straw! Well, it seems that Goubin's wife could not bear it, and so, going out at all risks, even of being killed by her husband, who was looking for her every where, she left the cellar in open day, and came to me. She knew I had still a little money left, and that I could assist her if I would; so, when Helmina had told me all about poor Lorraine, who was obliged to lie with her new-born babe on straw, I told her to bring them both to my room at once, and I would take a chamber for her next to mine. This I did; and, oh! how happy she was, poor Lorraine! when she found herself in a bed, with her babe beside her



in a little couch which I had bought for her. Helmina and I nursed her until she was able to get about again, and then, with the rest of my money, I enabled her to return to her washing-tubs."

"And when all your money was spent on Lorraine and her infant, what did you do, my child?" inquired Rodolph.

"I looked out for work; but it was too late. I can sew very well, I have good courage, and thought that I had only to ask for work and get it. Ah! how I deceived myself! I went into a shop where they sell ready-made linen, and asked for employment, and as I would not tell a story, I said I had just left prison. They shewed me the door, without making me any answer. I begged they would give me a trial, and they pushed me into the street as if I had been a thief. Then I remembered, too late, what Rigolette had told me. Little by little I sold my small stock of clothes and linen, and when all was gone they turned me out of my lodging. I had not tasted food for two days; I did not know where to sleep. At this moment I met the ogress and one of her old women who knew where I lodged, and was always coming about me since I left the prison. They told me they would find me work—and I believed them. I went with them, so exhausted for want of food that my senses were gone. They gave me brandy to drink, and—and—here I am!" said the unhappy creature, hiding her face in her hands.

"Have you lived a long time with the ogress, my poor girl?" asked Rodolph, in accents of the deepest compassion.

"Six weeks, sir," replied Goualeuse, shuddering as she spoke.

"I see—I see," said the Chourineur; "I know you now as well as if I were your father and mother, and you had never left my lap. Well, well, this is a confession indeed!"

"It makes you sad, my girl, to tell the story of your life," said Rodolph.

"Alas! sir," replied Fleur-de-Marie, sorrowfully, "since I was born this is the first time it ever happened to me to recall all these things at once, and my tale is not a merry one."

"Well," said the Chourineur, ironically, "you are sorry, perhaps, that you are not a kitchen-wench in a cook-shop, or a servant to some old brutes who think of no one but themselves."

"Ah!" said Fleur-de-Marie, with a deep sigh, "to be quite happy, we must be quite virtuous."

"Oh, what is your little head about now?" exclaimed the Chourineur, with a loud burst of laughter. "Why not count your rosary in honour of your father and mother, whom you never knew?"

"My father and mother abandoned me in the street like a puppy that is one too many in the house; perhaps they had not enough to feed themselves," said Goualeuse, with bitterness. "I want nothing of them—I complain of nothing—but there are lots happier than mine."

"Yours! why, what would you have? You are as handsome as a Venus, and yet only sixteen and a half; you sing like a nightingale, behave yourself very prettily, are called Fleur-de-Marie, and yet you complain! What will you say, I should like to know, when you will have a stove under your *paddlers*, and a chinchilla boa, like the ogress?"

"Oh! I shall never be so old as she is."

"Perhaps you have a charm for never growing any older?"

"No; but I could not lead such a life. I have already a bad cough."

"Ah, I see you already in the '*cold-meat box*.' Go along, you silly child, you."

"Do you often have such thoughts as these, Goualeuse?" said Rodolph.

"Sometimes. You, perhaps, M. Rodolph, understand me. In the morning, when I go to buy my milk from the milkwoman at the corner of Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, with the sous which the ogress gives me, and see her go away in her little cart drawn by her donkey, I do envy her so, and I say to myself, 'She is going into the country, to the pure air, to her home and her family;' and then I return alone into the garret of the ogress, where you cannot see plainly even at noon-day."

"Well, child, be good—laugh at your troubles—be good," said the Chourineur.

"Good! *mon Dieu!* and how do you mean be good? The clothes I wear belong to the ogress, and I am in debt to her for my board and lodging. I can't stir from her; she would have me taken up as a thief. I *belong* to her, and I must pay her!"

When she had uttered these last words, the unhappy girl could not help shuddering, and a tear trembled in her long eyelashes.

"Well, but remain as you are, and do not compare yourself to a country milkwoman," said the Chourineur. "Are you taking leave of

your senses? Only think, you may yet cut a figure in the capital, whilst the milkwoman must boil the pot for her brats, milk her cows, gather grass for her rabbits, and, perhaps, after all, get a black eye from her husband when he comes home from the pothouse. Why, it is really ridiculous to hear you talk of envying her."

The Goualeuse did not reply; her eye was fixed, her heart was full, and the expression of her face was painfully distressed. Rodolph had listened to the recital made with so painful a frankness, with deep interest. Misery, destitution, ignorance of the world, had weighed down this wretched girl, cast at sixteen years of age on the wide world of Paris!

Rodolph involuntarily thought of a beloved child whom he had lost—a girl, dead at six years of age, and who, had she survived, would have been, like Fleur-de-Marie, sixteen years and a half old. This recollection excited the more highly his solicitude for the unhappy creature whose narration he had just heard.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHOURINEUR'S HISTORY.

The reader has not forgotten the two guests at the *tapis-franc* who were watched so closely by the third individual who had come into the cabaret. We have said that one of these fellows, who had on a Greek cap, and concealed his left hand with much care, asked the ogress if the Schoolmaster and Gros-Boiteux had not arrived.

During the story of the Goualeuse, which they could not overhear, they had been constantly talking in a very low tone, throwing occasional hurried glances at the door. He who wore the Greek cap said to his comrade, "The Gros-Boiteux does not 'show,' nor the Schoolmaster."

"Perhaps the Skeleton has 'done for him,' and made off with the 'swag.'"

"A precious 'go' that would be for us, who 'laid the plant,' and look out for our 'snacks,'" replied the other.

The new-comer, who observed the two men, was seated too far off to hear a word they said, but, after having cautiously consulted a small paper concealed at the bottom of his cap, he appeared satisfied with his remarks, rose from the table, and said to the ogress, who was sleeping at the bar, with her feet on the stove, and her great cat on her knees,—

"I say, Mother Ponisse, I shall soon be back gain; take care of my pitcher and my plate; I don't want any one to make free with them."

"Make yourself easy, my fine fellow," said Mother Ponisse; "if your plate and pitcher are empty, no one will touch them."

The new-comer laughed loudly at the joke of the ogress, and then slipped out, so that his departure was unnoticed. At the moment when this man retired, and before the door could be shut, Rodolph saw the charcoal-dealer, whose black face and tall form we have already alluded to, and he had just time to manifest to him, by an impatient gesture, how much he disliked his watchful attendance; but the charcoal-man did not appear to heed this in the least, and still kept hanging about the *tapis-franc*. The countenance of the Goualeuse became still more saddened; with her back to the wall, her head drooping on her bosom, her full blue eyes gazing mechanically about her, the unfortunate being seemed bowed down with the weight of her oppressive thoughts. Two or three times, having met Rodolph's fixed look, she turned away, unable to account to herself for the singular impression which the unknown had caused her. Weighed down and abashed at his presence, she almost regretted having made so candid a narrative to him of her unhappy life. The Chourineur, on the contrary, was quite in high spirits; he had devoured the whole *harlequin* without the least assistance; the wine and brandy had made him very communicative; the fact of his having found his *master*, as he called him, had been forgotten in the generous conduct of Rodolph; and he also detected so decided a physical superiority, that his humiliation had given way to a sentiment of admiration, mingled with fear and respect. This absence of rancour, and the savage pride with which he boasted of never having robbed, proved that the Chourineur was not as yet thoroughly hardened. This had not escaped the sagacity of Rodolph, and he awaited the man's recital with curiosity.

"Now, my boy," said he, "we are listening."

The Chourineur emptied his glass, and thus began:—

"You, my poor girl, was at last taken to by the Chouette, whom the devil confound! You never had a shelter until the moment when you were imprisoned as a vagabond. I can never recollect having slept in what is called a bed before I was nineteen years of age,—a happy age!—and then I became a trooper."

"What, you have served then, Chourineur?" said Rodolph.

"Three years; but you'll hear all about it: the stones of the Louvre, the lime-kilns of Clichy, and the quarries of Montrouge, these were the hôtels of my youth. Then I had my house in Paris and in the country. Who but I ——"

"And what was your trade?"

"Faith, master, I have a foggy recollection of having strolled about in my childhood with an old rag-picker, who almost thumped me to death; and it must be true; for I have never since met one of these old Cupids with a wicker-work quiver, without a longing to pitch into him,—a proof that one of them must have thumped me when I was a child. My first employment was to help the knackers to cut the horses' throats at Montfaucon. I was about ten or twelve. When I began to slash (*chouriner*) these poor old beasts, it had quite an impression on me. At the month's end, I thought no more about it; on the contrary, I began to like my trade. No one had his knife so sharpened and keen-edged as mine; and that made me rejoice in using it. When I had cut the animal's throats, they gave me for my trouble a piece of the thigh of some animal that had died of disease; for those that they slaughter are sold to the 'cag-mag' shops near the School of Medicine, who convert it into beef, mutton, veal, or game, according to the taste of the purchasers. However, when I got to my morsel of horse's flesh, I was as happy as a king! I went with it into the lime-kiln like a wolf to his lair, and then, with the leave of the lime-burners, I made a glorious fry on the ashes. When the burners were not at work, I picked up some dry wood at Romainville, set light to it, and broiled my steak under the walls of the bone-house. The meat certainly was bloody, and almost raw, but that made a change."

"And your name? what did they call you?" asked Rodolph.

"I had hair much more flaxen than now, and the blood was always in my eyes, and so they called me the '*Albino*.' The Albinos are the white rabbits amongst men; they have red eyes," added the Chourineur, in a grave tone, and, as it were, with a physiological parenthesis.

"And your relations? your family?"

"My relations? oh! they lodge at the same number as the Goualeuse's. Place of my birth?—why, the first corner of no-matter-what street, either on the right or left-hand side of the way, and either going up or coming down the kennel."

"Then you have cursed your father and mother for having abandoned you?"

"Why, that would not have set my leg if I had broken it! No matter; though it's true they played me a scurvy trick in bringing me into the world. But I should not have complained if they had made me as beggars ought to be made; that is to say, without the sense of cold, hunger, or thirst. Beggars who don't like thieving would find it greatly to their advantage."

"You were cold, thirsty, hungry, Chourineur, and yet you did not steal?"

"No; and yet I was horribly wretched; it's a fact, that I have often gone with an empty bread-basket (fasted) for two days at a time: that was more than my share; but I never stole."

"For fear of a gaol?"

"Pooh!" said the Chourineur, shrugging his shoulders, and laughing loudly, "I should then not have stolen bread, for fear of getting my *allowance*, eh? An honest man, I was famishing; a thief, I should have been supported in prison, and right well, too! But I did not steal, because—because—why, because the idea of stealing never came across me; so that's all about it!"

This reply, noble as it was in itself, but of the rectitude of which the Chourineur himself had no idea, perfectly astonished Rodolph. He felt that the poor fellow who had remained honest in the midst of the most cruel privations was to be respected twofold, since the punishment of the crime became a certain resource for him. Rodolph held out his hand to this ill-used savage of civilisation, whom misery had been unable wholly to corrupt. The Chourineur looked at his host with astonishment—almost with respect; he hardly dared to touch the hand tendered to him. He felt impressed with some vague idea that there was a wide abyss between Rodolph and himself.

"'Tis well," said Rodolph to him, "you have heart and honour."

"Heart? honour? what, I? Come, now, don't *chaff* me," he replied, with surprise.

"To suffer misery and hunger rather than steal is to have heart and honour," said Rodolph gravely.

"Well, it may be," said the Chourineur, as if thinking, "it may be so."

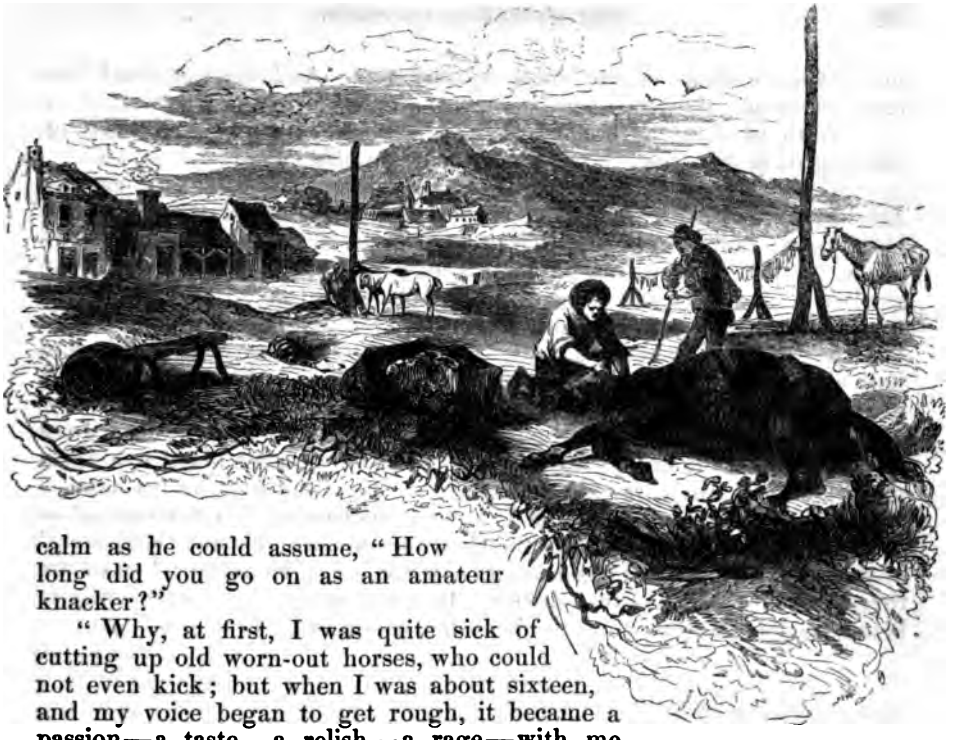
"Does it astonish you?"

"It really does; for people don't usually say such things to me; they generally treat me as they would a mangy dog. It's odd, though, the effect what you say has on me. Heart! honour!" he repeated with an air which was actually pensive.

"Well, what ails you?"

"I'faith, I don't know," replied the Chourineur, in a tone of emotion; "but these words, do you see, they quite make my heart beat; and I feel more flattered than if any one told me I was a 'better man' than either the Skeleton or the Schoolmaster. I never felt any thing like it. Be sure, though, that these words, and the blows of the fist at the end of my tussle,—you did lay 'em on like a good 'un,—not alluding to what you pay for the supper, and the words you have said,—in a word," he exclaimed bluntly, as if he could not find language to express his thoughts, "make sure that in life or death you may depend on the Chourineur."

Rodolph, unwilling to betray his emotion, replied in a tone as



calm as he could assume, "How long did you go on as an amateur knacker?"

"Why, at first, I was quite sick of cutting up old worn-out horses, who could not even kick; but when I was about sixteen, and my voice began to get rough, it became a passion—a taste—a relish—a rage—with me to cut and slash. I did not care for any thing but that; not even eating and drinking. You should have seen me in the middle of my work! Except an old pair of woollen trousers, I was quite naked. When, with my large and well-whetted knife in my hand, I had about me fifteen or twenty horses waiting their turn, by Jupiter! when I began to slaughter them, I don't know what possessed me—I was like a fury. My ears had singing in them, and I saw every thing *red*—all was red; and I slashed—and slashed—and slashed, until my knife fell from my hands! Thunder! what happiness! Had I had millions, I could have paid them to have enjoyed my trade!"

"It is that which has given you the habit of stabbing," said Rodolph.

"Very likely; but when I was turned of sixteen, the passion became so strong, that when I once began slashing, I became mad; I spoiled my work; yes, I spoiled the skins; because I slashed and cut them across and across; for I was so furious that I could not see clearly. At last they turned me out of the yard. I wanted employment with the butchers, for I have always liked that sort of business. Well, they quite looked down upon me; they despised me as a shoemaker does a cobbler. Then I had to seek my bread elsewhere, and I didn't find it very readily; and this was the time when my bread-basket was so often empty. At length I got employment in the quarries at Montrouge; but, at the end of two years, I was tired of going always round like a squirrel in his cage, and drawing stone for twenty sous a-day. I was tall and strong, and so I enlisted in a regiment. They asked my name, my age, and my papers. My name?—the *Albino*. My age?—look at my beard. My papers?—

here's the certificate of the master quarryman. As I was just the fellow for a grenadier, they took me."

"With your strength, courage, and taste for chopping and slashing, you ought, in war-time, to have been made an officer."

"Thunder and lightning! what do you say? What! to cut up English or Prussians! why, that would have been better than to cut up old horses; but, worse luck, there was no war, but a great deal of discipline. An apprentice tries to hit his master a thump; well, if he be the weaker, why he gets the worst of it; if he be the stronger, he has the best of it; he is turned out of doors, perhaps put into the cage—and that is all. In the army it is quite a different thing. One day our serjeant had bullied me a good deal, to make me more attentive,—he was right, for I was very slow; I did not like a poke he gave me, and I kicked at him—he pushed me again, I returned his poke; he collared me, and I gave him a punch of the head. They fell on me, and then my blood was up in my eyes, and I was enraged in a moment. I had my knife in my hand—I belonged to the cookery—and I 'went it my hardest.' I cut, slashed—slashed, chopped, as if I was in the slaughter-house. I made 'cold meat' of the serjeant, wounded two soldiers—it was a real shambles: I gave the three eleven wounds—yes, eleven. Blood flowed, flowed every where, blood, as though we were in the bone-house—I swam in it——"

The brigand lowered his head with a sombre, sullen air, and was silent.

"What are you thinking of, Chourineur?" asked Rodolph, with interest.

"Nothing," he replied, abruptly; and then, with an air of brutish

carelessness, he added, "At length they handcuffed me, and brought me before the 'big wigs,' and I was cast for death."

"You escaped, however?"

"True; but I had fifteen years at the galleys instead of being 'scragged.' I forgot to tell you that whilst in the regiment I had saved two of my comrades from drowning in the Marne, when we were quartered at Milan. At another time,—you will laugh, and say I am amphibious either in fire or water when saving men or women,—at another time, being in garrison at Rouen, all the wooden houses in one quarter were on fire, and burning like so many matches. I am the lad for a fire, and so I went to the place in an instant. They told me that there was an old woman who was bed-ridden, and could not escape from her room, which was already in flames. I went towards it, and, by Jove! how it did burn; it reminded me of the lime-kilns in my happy days. However, I saved the old woman, although I had the very soles of my feet scorched. Thanks to my having done these things, and the cunning of my advocate, my sentence was changed, and, instead of being 'scragged,' I was only sent to the hulks for fifteen years. When I found that my life would be spared, and I was to go to the galleys, I would have jumped upon the babbling fool, and twisted his neck, at the moment when he came to wish me joy, and to tell me he had saved my life, and be hanged to him! only they prevented me."

"Were you sorry, then, to have your sentence commuted?"

"Yes; for those who sport with the knife, the headsman's steel is the proper fate; for those who steal, the 'darbies' to their heels;—each his proper punishment. But to force you to live amongst galley-slaves, when you have a right to be guillotined out of hand, is infamous; and, besides, my life, when I first went to the *Bagne*, was rather queer: one don't kill a man, and soon forget it, you must know."

"You feel some remorse, then, Chourineur?"

"Remorse? no; for I have served my time," said the savage; "but at first, a night did not pass but I saw—like a nightmare—the serjeant and soldiers whom I had slashed and slaughtered; that is, they were not alone," added the brigand, in a voice of terror; "these were in tens, and dozens, and hundreds, and thousands, each waiting his turn, in a kind of slaughter-house, like the horses whose throats I used to cut at Montfaucon, awaiting each his turn. Then, then, I saw *red*, and began to cut and slash away on these men as I used formerly to do on the horses. The more, however, I chopped down the soldiers, the faster the ranks filled up with others; and as they died, they looked at one with an air so gentle—so gentle, that I cursed myself for killing 'em; but I couldn't help it. That was not all. I never had a brother; and yet it seemed as if every one of those whom I killed was my brother, and I loved all of them. At last, when I could bear it no longer, I used to wake covered all over with sweat, as cold as melting snow."

"That was a horrid dream, Chourineur!"

"It was; yes. That dream, do you see, was enough to drive one mad or foolish; so, twice, I tried to kill myself: once by swallowing verdigris, and another time, by trying to choke myself with my chain; but, confound it, I am as strong as a bull. The verdigris only made me thirsty; and as for the twist of the chain round my neck, why, that only gave me a natural

cravat of a blue colour. Afterwards, the desire of life came back to me, my nightmare ceased to torment me, and I did as others did."

"At the Bagne, you were in a good school for learning how to thieve?"

"Yes, but it was not to my taste. The other 'prigs' bullied me; but I soon silenced them with a few thumps of my chain. It was in this way I first knew the Schoolmaster; and I must pay him the compliment due to his blows,—he paid me off as you did some little time ago."

"He is, then, a criminal who has served his time?"

"He was sentenced for life, but escaped."

"Escaped, and not denounced?"

"I'm not the man to denounce him. Besides, it would seem as if I were afraid of him."

"But how is it that the police do not detect him? Have they not got his description?"

"His description? Oh! yes, yes; but it is long since he has scraped out from his phiz what Nature had placed there: now, none but the '*baker who puts the condemned in his oven*' (the devil) could recognise him (the Schoolmaster)."

"What has he done to himself?"

"He began by destroying his nose, which was an ell long: he ate it off with vitriol."

"You jest."

"If he comes in this evening, you'll see. He had a nose like a parrot, and now it is as flat as in a death's head; to say nothing of his lips, which are as thick as your fist, and his face, which is as wrinkled as the waistcoat of a rag-picker."

"And so he is not recognised?"

"It is six months since he escaped from Rochefort, and the 'traps' have met him a hundred times without knowing him."

"Why was he at the Bagne?"

"For having been a forger, thief, and assassin. He is called the Schoolmaster because he wrote a splendid hand, and has had a good education."

"And is he much feared?"

"He will not be any longer, when you have given him such a licking as you gave me. Oh! by Jove, I am anxious to see it."

"What does he do for a living?"

"He is associated with an old woman as bad as himself, and as deep as the 'old one;' but she is never seen, though he has told the ogress that some day or other he would bring his 'mot' (woman) with him."

"And this woman helps him in his robberies?"

"Yes, and in his murders too. They say he brags of having already, with her assistance, 'done for' two or three persons; and, amongst others, three weeks ago, a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy, whom they also robbed."

"He will be taken sooner or later."

"They must be very cunning, as well as powerful, to do that, for he always has under his blouse a brace of loaded pistols and a dagger. He says that *charlot* (the executioner) waits for him, and he can only lose his head once, and so he will kill all he can kill to try and escape. Oh! he makes no mystery of it; and as he is twice as strong as you and I, they will have a tough job who take him."

"What did you do, Chourineur, when you left the Bagne?"

"I offered myself to the master-lighterman of the Quai St.-Paul, and I get my livelihood there."

"But as you have never been a 'prig,' why do you live in the Cité?"

"Why, where else can I live? Who likes to be seen with a discharged criminal? I should be tired of always being alone, for I like company, and here I am with my equals. I have a bit of a row sometimes, and they fear me like fire in the Cité; but the police have nothing to say to me, except now and then for a 'shindy,' for which they give me, perhaps, twenty-four hours at the watch-house, and there's an end of that."

"What do you earn a-day?"

"Thirty-five sous for taking in the river foot-baths, up to the stomach from twelve to fifteen hours a-day, summer and winter; but let me be just, and tell truth; so if, through having my toes in the water, I get the *grenouille*,* I am allowed to break my arms in breaking up old vessels, and unloading timber on my back. I begin as a beast of burden, and end like a fish's tail. When I lose my strength entirely, I shall take a rake and a wicker-basket, like the old rag-picker whom I see in the recollections of my childhood."

"And yet you are not unhappy."

"There are worse than I am; and without my dreams of the serjeant and soldiers with their throats cut—for I have the dream still sometimes—I could quietly wait for the moment when I should drop down dead at the corner of some dunghill, like that at which I was born; but the dream—the dream—by heaven and earth! I don't like even to think of that," said the Chourineur, and he emptied the bowl of his pipe at a corner of the table.

The Goualeuse had hardly listened to the Chourineur; she seemed wholly absorbed in a deep and melancholy reverie. Rodolph himself was pensive. A tragic incident occurred, which brought these three personages to a recollection of the spot in which they were.

* A disease of the skin to which all who work in the water are liable.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARREST.

The man who had gone out for a moment, after having requested the ogress to look after his jug and plate, soon returned, accompanied by a tall brawny man, to whom he said, "It was a chance to meet in this way, old fellow! Come in, and let us have a glass together."

The Chourineur said, in a low voice, to Rodolph and the Goualeuse, pointing to the new-comer, "We shall have a row; he's a 'trap.' Look out for squalls."

The two ruffians, one of whom, with the Greek skull-cap pulled over his brows, had inquired several times for the Schoolmaster and the Gros-Boiteux, exchanged rapid glances of the eye, and, rising suddenly from the table, went towards the door; but the two police-officers, uttering a peculiar note, seized them. A fierce struggle ensued. The door of the tavern opened, and all the policemen dashed into the room, whilst, outside, were seen the muskets of the *gens d'armes*. Taking advantage of the tumult, the charcoal-seller, of whom we have spoken, advanced to the threshold of the *tapis-franc*, and, meeting the eye of Rodolph, he put to his lips the forefinger of his right hand. Rodolph, with a gesture as rapid as it was imperious, desired him to go, and then turned his attention to the scene before him. The man with the Greek skull-cap shrieked with rage, and, half extended on a table, struggled so desperately, that three men could scarcely hold him. His companion, enfeebled, dejected,

with livid aspect, and pale lips, his lower jaw fallen, and shaking convulsively, made no resistance, but held out his hands to be enclasped by the handcuffs. The ogress, seated at her bar, and used to such scenes, remained motionless, with her hands in the pockets of her apron.

"What have these fellows done, my dear Monsieur Narcisse Borel?" inquired she of one of the policemen whom she knew.

"Killed an old woman yesterday in the Rue St.-Christophe, and robbed her chamber. Before she died, the poor old thing said that she had bitten one of her murderers in the hand. We had our eyes on these two scoundrels, and my comrade, having come to make sure of his men, why, we have made free to take them."

"How lucky they paid me beforehand for their pint!" said the ogress. "Won't you take a drain o' nothin' *short*, M. Narcisse? Just a 'go' of 'Ratifi' of the Column.'"

"Thanks, Mother Ponisse, but I must make sure of my game; one fellow shews fight still."

The assassin in the Greek cap was furious with rage, and when they tried to get him into a hackney-coach which was waiting in the street, he resisted so stoutly that they were obliged to carry him. His accomplice, seized with a nervous tremor, could hardly support himself, and his blue lips trembled as though he were speaking. They threw him, helpless and unresisting, into the vehicle. Before he left the *tapis-franc*, the head officer looked attentively at the other guests assembled, and said to the Chourineur, in a tone almost kind,—

"What, you here, you bad lot? Why, it is a long time since we heard any thing of you. What, no more rows? Are you growing steady?"

"Steady as a stone figure. Why, you know that now I never break a head, even if I am begged to do so!"

"Oh, I don't think that would cost you much trouble, strong as you are."

"Yet here is my master," said the Chourineur, laying his hand on Rodolph's shoulder.

"Stay, I do not know him," said the *agent de police*, looking steadfastly at Rodolph.

"And I do not think we shall form an acquaintance now," replied he.

"I hope not, for your sake, my fine fellow," said the agent; then turning to the ogress, "Good night, Mother Ponisse, your *tapis-franc* is a regular mouse-trap; this is the third assassin I have taken here."

"I hope it won't be the last, Monsieur Narcisse, it is quite at your service," said the ogress, making a very insinuating nod with her head.

After the departure of the police, the young vagabond with the haggard visage, who was smoking and drinking brandy, refilled his pipe, and said in a hoarse voice to the Chourineur,—

"Didn't you *twig* the *cove* in the Greek cap? he's Boulotte's man. When I saw the traps walk in, I says to myself, says I, there's something up, and then, too, I saw him keep his hand always under the table."

"It's lucky for the Schoolmaster and the Gros Boiteux that they were not here," said the ogress; "Greek cap asked twice for him, and said they had business together; but I never turn 'nose' (informer) on any customer. If they take them, very well—every one to his trade; but I

never *sell* my friends. Oh, talk of the old gentleman, and you see his horns," added the hag, as at the moment a man and woman entered the cabaret; "here they are—the Schoolmaster and his companion. Well,

he was right not to shew her, for I never see such an ugly creetur in my born days. She ought to be very much obliged to him for having taken up with such a face."

At the name of the Schoolmaster a sort of shudder seemed to circulate amongst the guests of the *tapis-franc*. Rodolph himself, in spite of his natural intrepidity, could not wholly subdue a slight emotion at the sight of this redoubtable ruffian, whom he contemplated for some seconds with a mixed feeling of curiosity and horror. The Chourineur had spoken truth when he said that the Schoolmaster was frightfully mutilated. Nothing can be imagined more horrible than the countenance of this man. His face was furrowed in all directions with deep, livid cicatrices; the corrosive action of the vitriol had puffed out his lips; the cartilages of his nose were divided, and two misshapen holes supplied the loss of nostrils. His grey eyes were bright, small, circular, and sparkled savagely; his forehead, as flat as a tiger's, was half hidden beneath a fur cap, with long yellow hair, looking like the crest of a monster.

The Schoolmaster was not more than five feet four or five; his head, which was disproportionately large, was buried between two shoulders, broad, powerful, and fleshy, displaying themselves even under the loose folds of his coarse cotton blouse; he had long muscular arms, hands short, thick, and hairy to the very fingers' end, with legs somewhat bowed, whose enormous calves betokened his vast strength. This man presented, in fact, the exaggeration of what there is of short, thick-set, and condensed, in the type of the Hercules Farnese. As to the expression of ferocity which suffused this hideous mask, and the restless, wild, and glaring look, more like a wild beast than a human being, it is impossible to describe them.

The woman who accompanied the Schoolmaster was old, and rather neatly dressed in a brown gown, with a plaid shawl, of red and black

check, and a white bonnet. Rodolph saw her profile, and her green eye, hooked nose, skinny lips, peaked chin, and countenance at once wicked and cunning, reminded him involuntarily of La Chouette, that horrible old wretch who had made poor Fleur-de-Marie her victim. He was just on the point of saying this to the girl, when he saw her suddenly turn pale with fright, whilst looking at the hideous companion of the Schoolmaster, and seizing the arm of Rodolph with a trembling hand, the Goualeuse said, in a low voice,—

"Oh, the Chouette! the Chouette!—the one-eyed woman!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster, after having exchanged a few words in an under tone with Barbillon, came slowly towards the table where Rodolph, the Goualeuse, and the Chourineur, were sitting, and addressing himself to Fleur-de-Marie, in a hoarse voice, said,—

"Ah, my pretty, fair miss, you must quit these two *muffs*, and come with me."

The Goualeuse made no reply, but clung to Rodolph, her teeth chattering with fright.

"And I shall not be jealous of my man, my little *fourline*" (a pet word for assassin), added the Chouette, laughing loudly. She had not yet recognised in Goualeuse the 'Pegriotte,' her old victim.

"Well, my little white face, dost hear me?" said the monster, advancing. "If thou dost not come, I'll poke your eye out, and make you a match for the Chouette. And thou with the moustache," he said to Rodolph, "if thou dost not stand from between me and the wench, I'll crack thy crown."

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* defend me," cried Goualeuse to Rodolph, clasping her hands. Then, reflecting that she was about to expose him to great danger, she added, in a low voice, "No, no, do not move, Mister Rodolph; if he comes nearer, I will cry out for help, and for fear of the disturbance, which may call in the police, the ogress will take my part."

"Don't be alarmed, my child," said Rodolph, looking calmly at the Schoolmaster; "you are beside me—don't stir; and as this ill-looking scoundrel makes you as well as myself feel uncomfortable, I will kick him out."

"Thou?" said the Schoolmaster.

"I!" said Rodolph. And, in spite of the efforts of the Goualeuse, he rose from the table. Despite his hardihood, the Schoolmaster retreated a step, so threatening were the looks, so commanding the deportment, of Rodolph. There are peculiar glances of the eye which are irresistible, and certain celebrated duellists are said to owe their bloody triumphs to this fascinating glance, which unmans, paralyses, and destroys their adversaries. The Schoolmaster trembled, retreated a step, and, for once, distrustful of his giant strength, felt under his blouse for his long cut-and-thrust knife. A murder would have stained the *tapis-franc*, no doubt, if the Chouette, taking the Schoolmaster by the arm, had not screamed out,—

"A minute, a minute, *fourline*—let me say a word; you shall walk into those two *muffs* all the same, presently."

The Schoolmaster looked at her with astonishment. For some minutes she had been looking at Fleur-de-Marie with fixed and increasing

attention, as if trying to refresh her memory. At length, no doubt remained and she recognised the Goualeuse.

"Is it possible?" she cried, clasping her hands in astonishment. "It is Pegriotte, who stole my barley-sugar. But where do you come from? Is it the devil who sends you back?" and she shook her clenched hand at the young girl. "You won't come into my clutch again, eh? But be easy; if I do not pull out your teeth, I will have out of your eyes every tear in your body. Come, no airs and graces. You don't know what I mean. Why, I have found out the people who had the care of you before you were handed over to me. The Schoolmaster saw at the *Pré* (the galleys) the man who brought you to my *crib* when you were a brat, and he has proofs that the people who had you first were '*gentry coves*'" (rich people).

"My parents! do you know them?" cried Fleur-de-Marie.

"Never mind whether I know them or not, you shall know nothing about it. The secret is mine and my *fourline's*, and I will tear out his tongue rather than he shall blab it. What! it makes you snivel, does it, Pegriotte?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no," said Goualeuse, with a bitterness of accent; "now I do not care ever to know my parents."

Whilst La Chouette was speaking, the Schoolmaster had resumed his assurance, for, looking at Rodolph, he could not believe that a young man of slight and graceful make could for a moment cope with him, and, confident in his brutal force, he approached the defender of Goualeuse, and said to the Chouette, in an imperious voice,—

"Hold your jaw! I'll tackle with this swell, and then the fair lady may think me more to her fancy than he is."

With one bound Rodolph leaped on the table.

"Take care of my plates," shouted the ogress.

The Schoolmaster stood on his guard, his two hands in front, his chest advanced, firmly planted on his legs, and arched, as it were, on his brawny

legs, which were like balusters of stone. At the moment when Rodolph was springing at him, the door of the *tapis-franc* opened with violence, and the charcoal-man, of whom we have before spoken, and who was upwards of six feet high, dashed into the apartment, pushed the Schoolmaster on one side rudely, and coming up to Rodolph, said in German, in his ear, —

"Monseigneur, the countess and her brother — they are at the end of the street."

At these words Rodolph made an impatient and angry gesture, threw a louis d'or on the bar of the ogress, and made for the door in haste. The Schoolmaster attempted to arrest Rodolph's progress, but he, turning to him, gave him two or three rapid blows with his fists over the nose and eyes, and with such potent effect, that the beast staggered with very giddiness, and fell heavily against a table, which alone prevented his prostration on the floor.

"*Vive la Charte!* those are *my* blows—I know them," cried the Chourineur; "two or three more lessons like that, and I shall know all about it."

Restored to himself after a few moments, the Schoolmaster darted off in pursuit of Rodolph, but he had disappeared with the charcoal-man in the dark labyrinth of the streets of the Cité, and the brigand found it useless to follow.

At the moment when the Schoolmaster had returned, foaming with rage, two persons, approaching from the opposite side to that by which Rodolph had disappeared, entered into the *tapis-franc*, hastily, and out of breath, as if they had been running far and fast. Their first impulse was to look round the room.

"How unfortunate!" said one of them; "he has gone,—another opportunity lost."

The two new-comers spoke in English. The Goualeuse, horror-struck at meeting with the Chouette, and dreading the threats of the Schoolmaster, took advantage of the tumult and confusion caused by the arrival of the two fresh guests in the *tapis-franc*, and quietly gliding out by the half-opened door, left the cabaret.

CHAPTER VI.

THOMAS SEYTON AND THE COUNTESS SARAH.

The two persons who had just entered the *tapis-franc* were quite of another class from those who ordinarily frequented it. One, tall and erect, had hair almost white, black eyebrows and whiskers, a long and tanned face, with a stiff, formal air. His long frock coat was buttoned up to the throat, *à la militaire*. We shall call this individual Thomas Seyton. His companion was young, pale, and handsome, and appeared about thirty-one or two years of age. His hair, eyebrows, and eyes, were of a

deep black, which shewed off the more fully the pure whiteness of his face. By his step, the smallness of his stature, and the delicacy of his features, it was easy to detect a woman in male habiliments. This female was the Countess Sarah Macgregor. We will hereafter inform our readers of the

motives and events which had brought the countess and her brother into this cabaret of the Cité.

"Call for something to drink, Thomas, and ask the people here about *him;* perhaps they may give us some information," said Sarah, still speaking English.

The man with white hair and black eyebrows sat down at a table, whilst Sarah was wiping her forehead, and said to the ogress, in excellent French, "Madam, let us have something to drink, if you please."

The entrance of these two persons into the *tapis-franc* had excited universal attention. Their dress, their manners, all announced that they never frequented low drinking-shops, whilst, by their restless looks and disturbed countenances, it might be judged that some very powerful motives had led them hither. The Chourineur, the Schoolmaster, and the Chouette, viewed them with increasing curiosity.

Startled by the appearance of such strange customers, the ogress shared in the general surprise. Thomas Seyton, a second time, and with an impatient tone, said, "We have called for something to drink, ma'am, pray let us have it."

Mother Ponisse, flattered by their courtesy of manner, left her bar, and, coming towards her new guests, leaned her arms on their table, and said, "Will you have a pint of wine in measure or a bottle?"

"A bottle of wine, glasses, and some water."

The ogress brought the supplies demanded, and Thomas Seyton threw her a five-franc piece, and refused the change which she offered to him.

"Keep it, my good woman, for yourself, and perhaps you will take a glass with us."

"You're uncommon purlite, sir," looking at the countess's brother with as much surprise as gratitude.

"But tell me, now," said he, "we had appointed to meet a friend in a cabaret in this street, and have, perhaps, mistaken the house in coming here."

"This is the 'White Rabbit,' at your service, sir."

"That's right enough, then," said Thomas, making a sign to Sarah; "yes, it was at the 'White Rabbit' that he was to give us the meeting."

"There are not two 'White Rabbits' in this street," said the ogress, with a toss of her head. "But what sort of a person was your friend?"

"Tall, slim, and with hair and moustaches of light chestnut," said Seyton.

"Exactly, exactly; that's the man who has just gone out. A charcoal-man, very tall and stout, came in and said a few words to him, and they left together."

"The very man we want to meet," said Tom.

"Were they alone here?" inquired Sarah.

"Why, the charcoal-man only came in for one moment; but your comrade supped here with the Chourineur and Goualeuse;" and, with a nod of her head, the ogress pointed out the individual of the party who was left still in the cabaret.

Thomas and Sarah turned towards the Chourineur. After contemplating him for a few minutes, Sarah said, in English, to her companion, "Do you know this man?"

"No; Karl lost all trace of Rodolph at the entrance of these obscure streets. Seeing Murphy disguised as a charcoal-seller, keeping watch about this cabaret, and constantly peeping through the windows, he was afraid that something wrong was going on, and so came to warn us. Murphy, no doubt, recognised him."

During this conversation, held in a very low tone, and in a foreign tongue, the Schoolmaster said to the Chouette, looking at Tom and Sarah, "The *swell* has *shelled* out a *bull* to the ogress. It is just twelve, rains and blows like the devil. When they leave the *crib*, we will be on their *lay*, and *draw* the *flat* of his *blunt*. As his *mot* is with him, he'll hold his jaw."

If Tom and Sarah had heard this foul language, they would not have understood it, and would not have detected the plot against them.

"Be quiet, *fourline*," answered the Chouette; "if the *cull* sings out for the *traps*, I have my vitriol in my pocket, and will break the phial in his *patter-box*. Nothing like a drink to keep children from crying," she added. "Tell me, darling, sha'n't we lay hands on Pegriotte the first time we meet with her? And only let me once get her to our place, and I'll rub her *chops* with my vitriol, and then my lady will no longer be proud of her fine skin."

"Well said, Chouette; I shall make you my wife some day or other," said the Schoolmaster; "you have no equal for skill and courage. On that night with the cattle-dealer, I had an opportunity of judging of you; and I said, 'Here's the wife for me, she *works* better than a man.'"

"And you said right, *fourline;* if the Skeleton had had a woman like me at his elbow, he would not have been *nabbed* with his *gulley* in the dead man's weasand."

"He's done up, and now he will not leave the *stone jug*, except to kiss the headsman's daughter, and be a head shorter."

"What strange language these people talk!" said Sarah, who had involuntarily heard the last few words of the conversation between the Schoolmaster and the Chouette. Then she added, pointing to the Chourineur, "If we ask this man some questions about Rodolph, perhaps he may be able to answer them."

"We can but try," replied Thomas, who said to the Chourineur, "Comrade, we expected to find in this cabaret a friend of ours; he supped with you, I find. Perhaps, as you know him, you will tell us which way he has gone?"

"I know him because he gave me a precious good hiding two hours ago, to prevent me from beating Goualeuse."

"And have you never seen him before?"

"Never; we met by chance in the alley which leads to Bras Rouge's house."

"Hostess, another bottle of the best," said Thomas Seyton.

Sarah and he had hardly moistened their lips, and their glasses were still full; but Mother Ponisse, doubtless anxious to pay proper respect to her own cellar, had frequently filled and emptied hers.

"And put it on the table where that gentleman sits, if he will permit," added Thomas, who, with Sarah, seated themselves beside the Chourineur who was as much astonished as flattered by such politeness.

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette were talking over their own dark plans in low tones and *flash* language. The bottle being brought, and Sarah and her brother seated with the Chourineur and the ogress, who had considered a second invitation as superfluous, the conversation was resumed.

"You told us, my good fellow, that you met our comrade Rodolph in the house where Bras Rouge lives?" inquired Thomas Seyton, as he hob and nobbed with the Chourineur.

"Yes, my good fellow," replied he, as he emptied his glass at a gulp.

"What a singular name is Bras Rouge! What is this Bras Rouge?"

"*Il pastique le maltouze*" (smuggles), said the Chourineur, in a careless tone, and then added, "This is jolly good wine, Mother Ponisse!"

"If you think so, do not spare it, my fine fellow," said Seyton, and he filled the Chourineur's glass as he spoke.

"Your health, mate," said he, "and the health of your little friend, who—but mum. 'If my aunt was a man, she'd be my uncle,' as the proverb says. Ah! you sly rogue, I'm up to you!"

Sarah coloured slightly as her brother continued, "I did not quite understand what you meant about Bras Rouge. Rodolph came from his house, no doubt?"

"I told you that Bras Rouge *pastique la maltouze.*"

Thomas regarded the Chourineur with an air of surprise.

"What do you mean by *pastique la mal*—— What do you call it?"

"*Pastiquer la maltouze.* He smuggles, I suppose you would call it; but it seems you can't *patter flash?*"

"My fine fellow, I don't understand one word you say."

"I see you can't talk *slang* like M. Rodolph."

"Slang?" said Thomas Seyton, looking at Sarah with an astonished air.

"Ah! you are *yokels;* but, comrade, Rodolph is an *out-and-out pal,* he is. Though only a fan-painter, yet he is as *downy* in *flash* as I am myself. Well, since you can't speak this very fine language, I tell you,

in plain French, that Bras Rouge is a smuggler, and, besides that, has a small tavern in the Champs Elysées. I say, without breaking faith, that he is a smuggler, for he makes no secret of it, but owns it under the very nose of the custom-house officers. Find him out, though, if you can; Bras Rouge is a deep one."

"What could Rodolph want at the house of this man?" asked Sarah.

"Really, sir, or madam, which you please, I know nothing about any thing, as true as I drink this glass of wine. I was *chaffing* to-night with the Goualeuse, who thought I was going to beat her, and she ran up Bras Rouge's alley, and I after her: it was as dark as the devil. Instead of hitting Goualeuse, however, I stumbled on Master Rodolph, who soon gave me better than I sent. Such thumps! and especially those infernal thwacks with his fist at last. My eyes! how hot and heavy they did fall! But he's promised to teach me, and to——"

"And Bras Rouge, what sort of a person is he?" asked Tom. "What goods does he sell?"

"Bras Rouge? oh, by the Holy! he sells every thing he is forbidden to sell, and does every thing which it is forbidden to do. That's his line, ain't it, Mother Ponisse?"

"Oh! he's a boy with more than one string to his bow," answered the ogress. "He is, besides, principal occupier of a certain house in the Rue du Temple,—a rum sort of a house, to be sure; but mum," added she, fearing to have revealed too much.

"And what is the address of Bras Rouge in that street?" asked Seyton of the Chourineur.

"No. 13, sir."

"Perhaps we may learn something there," said Seyton, in a low voice, to his sister. "I will send Karl thither to-morrow."

"As you know M. Rodolph," said the Chourineur, "you may boast the acquaintance of a stout friend and a good fellow. If it had not been for the charcoal-man, he would have *doubled up* the Schoolmaster, who is there in the corner with the Chouette. By the Lord! I can hardly contain myself, when I see that old hag, and know how she behaved to the Goualeuse——but patience, a blow delayed is not a blow lost, as the saying is."

The Hôtel de Ville clock struck midnight; the lamp of the tavern only shed a dim and flickering light. Except the Chourineur and his two companions, the Schoolmaster and the "Screech-owl," all the guests of the *tapis-franc* had retired one after the other.

The Schoolmaster said, in an under tone, to the Chouette, "If we go and hide in the alley opposite, we shall see the swells come out, and know which road they take. If they turn to the left, we can double upon them at the turning of the Rue St.-Eloi; if to the right, we will wait for them by the ruins close to the tripe-market. There's a large hole close by, and I have a capital idea."

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette then went towards the door.

"You won't, then, take a *drain* of *nothin'* to-night?" said the ogress.

"No, Mother Ponisse, we only came in to take shelter from the rain," said the Schoolmaster, as he and the Chouette went out.

CHAPTER VII.

"YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE."

THE noise which was made by the shutting of the door aroused Tom and Sarah from their reverie, and they rose, and, having thanked the Chourineur for the information he had given them, the fellow went out, the wind blowing very strongly, and the rain falling in torrents. The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, hidden in an alley opposite the *tapis-*

franc, saw the Chourineur go down the street, in the direction of the street in which the house in ruins was situated. His steps, which were somewhat irregular, in consequence of the frequent libations of the evening, were soon unheard amidst the whistling of the storm and the sheets of rain which dashed against the walls. Sarah and Tom left the tavern in spite of the tempest, and took a contrary direction to the Chourineur.

"They're done for," said the Schoolmaster, in a low key, to the Chouette; "out with your vitriol, and mind your eye."

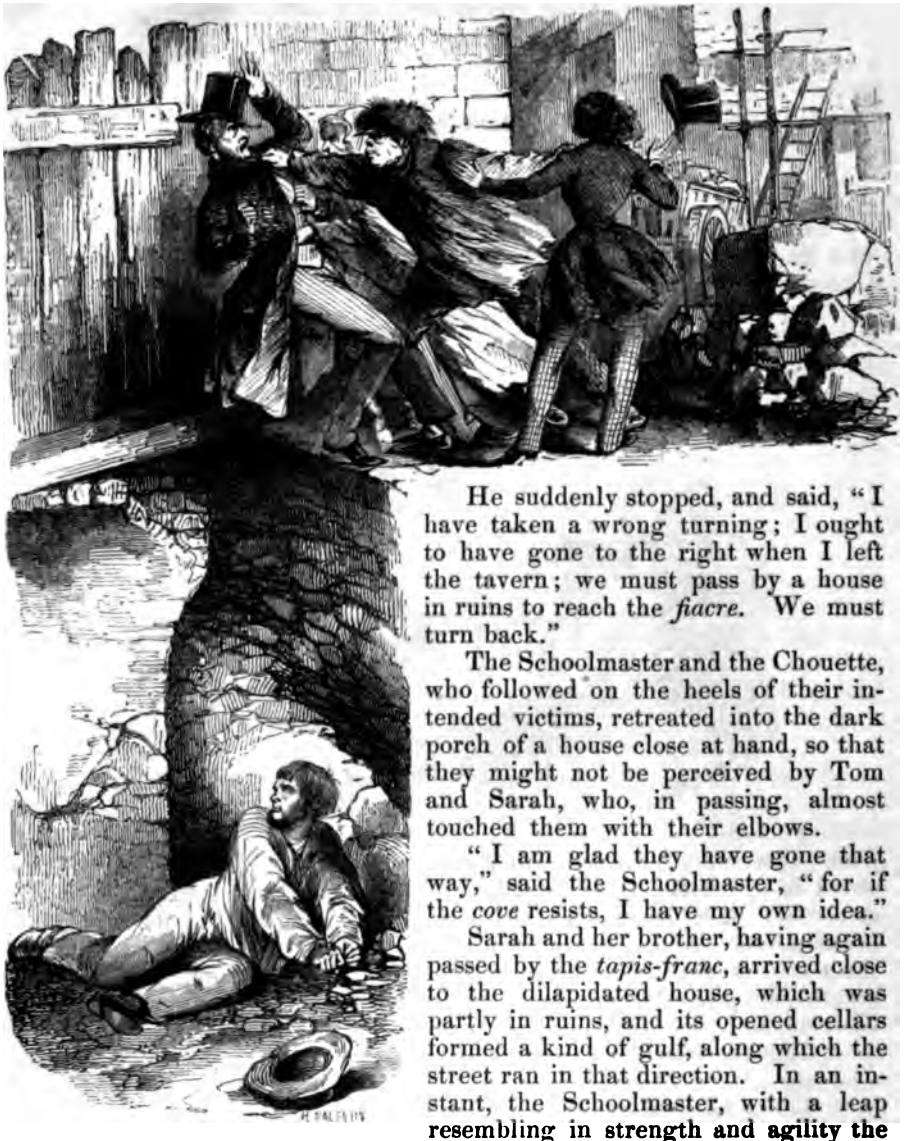
"Let us take off our shoes, and then they won't hear us as we follow," suggested the Chouette.

"You are right—always right; let us tread like cats, my old darling."

The two monsters took off their shoes, and moved stealthily along, keeping in the shadows of the houses. By means of this stratagem they followed so closely, that, although within a few steps of Sarah and Tom, they did not hear them.

"Fortunately our hackney-coach is at the end of the street; the rain falls in torrents. Are you not cold, Sarah?"

"Perhaps we shall glean something from this smuggler—this Bras Rouge," said Sarah, in a thoughtful tone, and not replying to her brother's inquiry.



He suddenly stopped, and said, "I have taken a wrong turning; I ought to have gone to the right when I left the tavern; we must pass by a house in ruins to reach the *fiacre*. We must turn back."

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, who followed on the heels of their intended victims, retreated into the dark porch of a house close at hand, so that they might not be perceived by Tom and Sarah, who, in passing, almost touched them with their elbows.

"I am glad they have gone that way," said the Schoolmaster, "for if the *cove* resists, I have my own idea."

Sarah and her brother, having again passed by the *tapis-franc*, arrived close to the dilapidated house, which was partly in ruins, and its opened cellars formed a kind of gulf, along which the street ran in that direction. In an instant, the Schoolmaster, with a leap resembling in strength and agility the spring of a tiger, seized Seyton with one hand by the throat, and exclaimed, "Your money, or I will fling you into this hole!"

Then the brigand, pushing Seyton backwards, shoved him off his balance, and with one hand held him suspended over the mouth of the deep excavation; whilst, with his other hand, he grasped the arm of Sarah, as if in a vice. Before Tom could make the slightest struggle, the Chouette had emptied his pockets with singular dexterity. Sarah did not utter a cry, nor try to resist: she only said, in a calm tone, "Give up your purse, brother;" and then accosting the robber, "We will make no noise, do not do us any injury."

The Chouette, having carefully searched the pockets of the two victims of this ambush, said to Sarah, "Let's see your hands, if you've got any rings. No," said the old brute grumblingly, "no, not one ring. What a shame!"

Tom Seyton did not lose his presence of mind during this scene, rapidly and unexpectedly as it had occurred.

"Will you strike a bargain? My pocket-book contains papers quite useless to you; return it to me, and to-morrow I will give you twenty-five louis d'ors," said Tom to the Schoolmaster, whose hand relaxed something of its fierce gripe.

"Oh! ah! to lay a trap to catch us," replied the thief. "Be off, without looking behind you, and be thankful that you have escaped so well."

"One moment," said the Chouette; "if he behaves well, he shall have his pocket-book. There is a way." Then, addressing Thomas Seyton, "You know the plain of St. Denis?"

"I do."

"Do you know where St. Ouen is?"

"Yes."

"Opposite St. Ouen, at the end of the road of La Revolte, the plain is wide and open. Across the fields, one may see a long way. Come there to-morrow, quite alone, with your money in your hand; you will find me and the pocket-book ready. Hand me the cash, and I will hand you the pocket-book."

"But he'll trap you, Chouette."

"Oh, no, he won't; I'm up to him or any of his *dodges*. We can see a long way off. I have only one eye, but that is a piercer; and if the *cove* comes with a companion, he won't find any body; I shall have *mizzled*."

A sudden idea seemed to strike Sarah, and she said to the brigand, "Will you like to gain some money?"

"Yes."

"Did you see, in the cabaret we have just left—for I know you again—the man whom the charcoal-man came to seek?"

"A dandy with moustaches? Yes, I would have stuck it into the fellow, but he did not give me time. He stunned me with two blows of his fists, and upset me on the table—for the first time that any man ever did so. Curses on him! but I will be revenged."

"He is the man I mean," said Sarah.

"He?" cried the Schoolmaster, "a thousand francs, and I'll kill him."

"Wretch! I do not seek his life," replied Sarah to the Schoolmaster.

"What, then, would you have?"

"Come to-morow to the Plain of St. Denis; you will there find my companion," she replied; "you will see that he is alone, and he will tell you what to do. I will not give you one thousand, but two thousand, francs, if you succeed."

"*Fourline*," said the Chouette, in a low tone, to the Schoolmaster, "there's *blunt* to be had; these are a *swell lot*, who want to be revenged on an enemy, and that enemy is the *beggar* that you wish to *floor*. Let's go and meet him. I would go, if I were you. Fire and smoke! old boy, it will pay for looking after."

"Well, my wife shall be there," said the Schoolmaster; "you will tell her what you want, and I shall see——"

"Be it so; to-morrow at one."

"At one o'clock."

"In the Plain of St. Denis?"

"In the Plain of St. Denis."

"Between St. Ouen and the road of La Revolte, at the end of the road?"

"Agreed."

"I will bring your pocket-book."

"And you shall have the five hundred francs I promised you, and we will agree in the other matter, if you are reasonable."

"Now, you go to the right, and we to the left hand. Do not follow us, or else——"

The Schoolmaster and the Chouette hurried off, whilst Tom and the Countess went in the other direction, towards Notre Dame.

A concealed witness had been present at this transaction; it was the Chourineur, who had entered the cellars of the house to get shelter from the rain. The proposal which Sarah made to the brigand respecting Rodolph deeply interested the Chourineur, who, alarmed for the perils which appeared about to beset his new *friend*, regretted that he could not warn him of them. Perhaps his detestation of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette might have something to do with this feeling.

The Chourineur resolved to inform Rodolph of the danger which threatened him; but *how?* He had forgotten the address of the self-styled fan-painter. Perhaps Rodolph would never again come to the *tapis-franc*, and then how could he warn him? Whilst he was conning all this over in his mind, the Chourineur had mechanically followed Tom and Sarah, and saw them get into a coach which awaited them near Notre Dame.

The *fiacre* started. The Chourineur got up behind, and at one o'clock it stopped on the Boulevard de l'Observatoire, and Thomas and Sarah went down a narrow entrance, which was close at hand. The night was

pitch dark, and the Chourineur, that he might know the next day the place where he then was, drew from his pocket his clasp-knife, and cut a deep notch in one of the trees at the corner of the entrance, and then returned to his resting-place, which was at a considerable distance.

For the first time for a very long while, the Chourineur enjoyed in his den a comfortable sleep, which was not once interrupted by the horrible vision of the "*Serjeant's slaughter-house*," as, in his coarse language, he styled it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WALK.

On the day after the evening on which the various events we have described had passed, a bright autumnal sun shone from a pure sky; the darkness of the night had wholly disappeared. Although always shaded by the height of the houses, the disreputable neighbourhood into which the reader has followed us seemed less horrible when viewed in the light of open day.

Whether Rodolph no longer feared meeting with the two persons whom he had evaded the over-night, or did not care whether he faced them or not, about eleven o'clock in the morning he entered the Rue aux Fêves, and directed his steps toward the tavern of the ogress.

Rodolph was still in a workman's dress; but there was a decided neatness in his costume. His new blouse, open on his chest, shewed a red woollen shirt, closed by several silver buttons; whilst the collar of another shirt, of white cotton, fell over a black silk cravat, loosely tied round his neck. From under his sky-blue velvet cap, with a bright leather peak, several locks of chestnut hair were seen; and his boots, cleaned very brightly, and replacing the heavy iron shoes of the previous evening, shewed off to advantage a well-formed foot, which seemed all

the smaller from appearing out of a loose pantaloon of olive velveteen. The costume was well calculated to display the elegant shape and carriage of Rodolph, which combined so much grace, suppleness, and power. The ogress was airing herself at her door when Rodolph presented himself.

"Your servant, young man; you have come, no doubt, for your change of the twenty francs," she said, with some show of respect, not venturing to forget that the conqueror of the Chourineur had handed her a louis d'or the previous evening. "There is seventeen francs ten sous coming to you; but that's not all. There was somebody here asking after you last night,—a tall gent, well dressed, and with him a young woman in men's clothes. They drank my best wine along with the Chourineur."

"Oh! with the Chourineur, did they? And what could they have to say to him?"

"When I say they drank, I make a mistake; they only just sipped a drain or so, and——"

"But what did they say to the Chourineur?"

"Oh! they talked of all manner of things—of Bras Rouge, and the rain, and fine weather."

"Do they know Bras Rouge?"

"Not by no means: the Chourineur told 'em all about him, and as how as you——"

"Well, well, that is not what I want to know."

"You want your change."

"Yes, and I want to take Goualeuse to pass the day in the country."

"Oh! that's impossible."

"Why?"

"Why? because she may never come back again. Her things belongs to me, not including as she owes me a matter of ninety francs as a balance for her board and lodging, for the six weeks as she has lodged with me; and if I didn't know her to be as honest a gal as is, I should never let her go out of sight."

"Goualeuse owes you ninety francs?"

"Ninety francs ten sous; but what's that to you, my lad? Are you a-going to come 'my lord,' and pay it for her?"

"Yes," said Rodolph, throwing five louis on the ogress's bar, "and what's your price for the clothes she wears?"

The old hag, amazed, looked the louis one after the other, with an air of much doubt and mistrust.

"What! do you think I have given you bad money? Send and get change for one of them; but make haste about it. I say, again, how much for the garments the poor girl is wearing?"

The ogress, divided between her desire to make a good harvest, her surprise to see a workman with so much money, the fear of being cheated, and the hopes of still greater gain, was silent for an instant, and then replied, "Oh, them things is well worth a hundred francs."

"What! those rags? Come, now, you shall keep the change from yesterday, and I'll give you another louis, and no more. If I give you all I have, I shall cheat the poor, who ought to get some alms out of me."

"Well, then, my fine fellow, I'll keep my things, and Goualeuse shan't go out. I have a right to sell my things for what I choose."

"May Lucifer one day fry you as you deserve! Here's your money, go and look for Goualeuse."

The ogress pocketed the gold, thinking that the workman had committed a robbery, or received a legacy, and then said, with a nasty leer, "Well, indeed! why not go up stairs, and find Goualeuse yourself; she'll be very glad to see you, for, on my life, she was much smitten with you yesterday?"

"Do you go and fetch her, and tell her I will take her into the country; that's all you need say; not a word about my having paid you her debt."

"Why not?"

"What's that to you?"

"Oh! nothing; it's no matter to me; I would rather that she still believed herself in my clutch——"

"Will you hold your tongue, and do as I bid you?"

"Oh! what a cross cretur you are; I pity any body who is under you. Well, I'm going, I'm going;" and the ogress went up stairs.

After a few minutes she came down again.

"Goualeuse would not believe me, and really turned quite crimson when she knew you were here; and when I told her that I would give her leave to pass the day in the country, I thought she would have gone crazy,—for the first time in her life she was inclined to throw her arms about my neck."

"That was her delight at leaving you."

Fleur-de-Marie entered at this moment, dressed as she was the overnight, with her gown of brown stuff, her little orange shawl tied behind her, and her handkerchief of red checks over her head, leaving only two thick bands of light hair visible. She blushed when she saw Rodolph, and looked down with a confused air.

"Would you like to pass the day in the country with me, my lass?" asked Rodolph.

"Very much, indeed, Monsieur Rodolph," said Goualeuse, "since madame gives me leave."

"Yes, yes, you may go, my little duck, because you're sitch a good gal. Come and kiss me afore you go."

And the old beldam offered her bloated lips to Fleur-de-Marie. The poor girl, overcoming her disgust, bent her forehead to the ogress, but Rodolph, giving a sudden push with his elbow, shoved the hag back on her seat, took Fleur-de-Marie's arm, and left the *tapis-franc*, amidst the loud maledictions of Mother Ponisse.

"Mind, M. Rodolph," said Goualeuse; "the ogress will, perhaps, throw something at you—she is very spiteful."

"Oh, don't heed her, my girl. But what's the matter with you? you seem embarrassed, sad. Are you sorry for having come out with me?"

"Oh, dear, no; but—but—you give me your arm!"

"Well, and what of that?"

"You are a workman, and some one may tell your master that they met you with me, and harm may come of it; masters do not like their workmen to be unsteady." And Goualeuse gently removed her arm from that of Rodolph, adding, "Go on by yourself; I will follow you to the barrier; when we are once in the fields, I can walk with you."

" Do not be uneasy," said Rodolph, touched by the poor girl's consideration, and taking her arm again; " my master does not live in this quarter, and we shall find a coach on the Quai aux Fleurs."

" As you please, M. Rodolph; I only said so that you might not get into trouble."

" I am sure of that, and thank you very much. But tell me, is it all the same to you what part of the country we go into?"

" Yes, quite so, M. Rodolph, so that it be the country. It is so fine and it is so nice to breathe the open air! Do you know, that I have not been farther than the flower-market for these six weeks? And now, if the ogress allows me to leave the Cité, she must have great confidence in me."

" And when you came here, was it to buy flowers?"

" Oh, no, I had no money; I only came to look at them, and breathe their beautiful smell. During the half-hour which the ogress allowed me to pass on the quay on market-days, I was so happy that I forgot every thing else."

" And on returning to the ogress, and those filthy streets?"

" Oh, why then I returned more sad than when I set out; but I wiped my eyes, that I might not be beaten for crying. Yet, at the market, what made me envious,—oh! so envious,—was to see neat, clean, little workwomen, who were going away so gaily with a beautiful pot of flowers in their hands."

" I am sure that if you had had but a few flowers in your own window, they would have kept you company."

" What you say is quite true, M. Rodolph. Only imagine, one day,

on her birth-day, the ogress, knowing my taste, gave me a little rose-tree. If you only knew how happy it made me—I was never tired of looking at it,—my own rose-tree! I counted its leaves, its flowers; but the air of the Cité is bad, and it began to wither in two days. Then—but you'll laugh at me, M. Rodolph."

"No, no; go on."

"Well, then, I asked the ogress to let me go out, and take my rose-tree for a walk, as I would have taken a child out. Well, then, I carried it to the Quai, thinking that to be with other flowers in the fresh and

balmy air would do it good. I bathed its poor fading leaves in the clear waters of the fountain, and then to dry it I placed it for a full quarter of an hour in the sun. Dear little rose-tree! it never saw the sun in the Cité any more than I did, for in our street it never descends lower than the roof. At last I went back again, and I assure you, M. Rodolph, that, thanks to these walks, my rose-tree lived at least ten days longer than it would have done, had I not taken such pains with it."

"No doubt of it. But when it died, what a loss it must have been to you!"

"I cried heartily, for it grieved me very, very much: and you see, M. Rodolph—for you know one loves flowers, although one hasn't any of one's own—you see, I felt grateful to it, the dear rose-tree, for blooming so kindly for me, although I was so ——"

Goualeuse bent her head, and blushed deeply.

"Unhappy child! with this feeling of your own position, you must often ——"

"Have desired to end it, you mean, sir?" said Goualeuse, interrupting her companion. "Yes, yes, more than once. A month ago I looked over

the parapet at the Seine; but then, when I looked at the flowers, and the sun, then I said, 'The river will be always there; I am but sixteen and a half—who knows?'"

"When you said '*who knows*,' you had hope?"

"Yes."

"And what did you hope?"

"To find some charitable soul who would get me work, so that I might be enabled to leave the ogress; and this hope comforted me. Then I said to myself, I am very wretched, but I have never injured any body, and if I had any one to advise me I should not be as I am. This lightened my sorrow a little, though it had greatly increased at the loss of my rose-tree," added Goualeuse, with a sigh.

"Always so very sad."

"Yes; but look, here it is."

And Goualeuse took from her pocket a little bundle of wood trimmed very carefully, and tied with a rose-coloured bow.

"What, have you kept it?"

"I have, indeed; it is all I possess in the world."

"What, have you nothing else?"

"Nothing."

"This coral necklace?"

"Belongs to the ogress."

"And you have not a piece of riband, a cap, or handkerchief?"

"No, nothing—nothing but the dead branches of my poor rose-tree; and that is why I love it so."

When Rodolph and Goualeuse had reached the Quai aux Fleurs, a coach was waiting there, into which Rodolph handed Goualeuse. He got in himself, saying to the driver,—

"To Saint Denis; I will tell you presently which road to take."

The coach went on. The sun was bright, and the sky cloudless, whilst the air, fresh and crisp, circulated freely through the open windows.

"Here is a woman's cloak!" said Goualeuse, remarking that she had seated herself on the garment without having at first noticed it.

"Yes, it is for you, my child; I brought it with me for fear you should be cold."

Little accustomed to such attention, the poor girl looked at Rodolph with surprise.

"*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur Rodolph, how kind you are; I am really ashamed ——"

"Because I am kind?"

"No; but you do not speak as you did yesterday; you appear quite another person."

"Tell me, then, Fleur-de-Marie, which do you like best—the Rodolph of yesterday, or the Rodolph of to-day?"

"I like you better now; yet yesterday I seemed to be more your equal." Then, as if correcting herself, and fearing to have annoyed Rodolph, she said to him, "When I say your equal, Monsieur Rodolph, I do not mean that I can ever be that."

"One thing in you astonishes me very much, Fleur-de-Marie."

"And what is that, M. Rodolph?"

"You appear to have forgotten that the Chouette said to you yesterday that she knew the persons who had brought you up."

"Oh! I have not forgotten it; I thought of it all night, and I cried bitterly; but I am sure it is not true; she invented this tale to make me unhappy."

"Yet the Chouette may know more than you think. If it were so, should you not be delighted to be restored to your parents?"

"Alas! sir, if my parents never loved me, what should I gain by discovering them? They would only see me and —— But if they *did* ever love me, what shame I should bring on them? perhaps I should kill them!"

"If your parents ever loved you, Fleur-de-Marie, they will pity, pardon, and still love you. If they have abandoned you, then, when they see the frightful destiny to which they have brought you, *their* shame and remorse will avenge you."

"What is the good of vengeance?"

"You are right; let us talk no more on the subject."

At this moment the carriage reached Saint Ouen, where the road divides to Saint Denis and the Revolte. In spite of the monotony of the landscape, Fleur-de-Marie was so delighted at seeing the *fields*, as she called them, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollection of the Chouette had awakened in her, her lovely countenance grew radiant with delight. She leaned out of the window, clasping her hands, and crying,—

"Monsieur Rodolph, how happy I am! Grass! Fields! May I get out?—it is so fine! I should so like to run in the meadows."

"Let us run, then, my child.—Coachman, stop."

"What! you too? will you run, M. Rodolph?"

"I'm having a holyday."

"Oh! what pleasure!"

And Rodolph and Goualeuse, taking each other's hand, ran as fast as

they could over a long piece of latter-grass, just mowed. It would be impossible to describe the leaps and exclamations of joy, the intense

delight, of Fleur-de-Marie. Poor lamb! so long a prisoner, she inspired the free air with indescribable pleasure. She ran, returned, stopped, and then raced off again with renewed happiness. At the sight of the daisies and buttercups Goualeuse could not restrain her transport,—she did not leave one flower which she could gather. After having run about in this way for some time she became rather tired, for she had lost the habit of exercise, and stopped to take breath, sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree which was lying at the edge of a deep ditch.

The clear and white complexion of Fleur-de-Marie, generally rather pale, was now heightened by the brightest colour. Her large blue eyes sparkled brightly, her vermilion lips, partly opened to recover her breath, displayed two rows of liquid pearls; her bosom throbbed under her worn-out little orange shawl, and she placed one of her hands upon her heart, as if to restrain its quickened pulsation, whilst with the other hand she proffered to Rodolph the bouquet of field flowers which she had just gathered. Nothing could be more charming than the combination of innocence and pure joy which beamed on her expressive countenance. When Fleur-de-Marie could speak, she said to Rodolph, with an accent of supreme happiness and of gratitude, almost amounting to piety,—

"How good is the great God to give us so fine a day!"

A tear came into Rodolph's eye when he heard this poor, forsaken, despised, lost creature utter a cry of happiness and deep gratitude to the Creator, because she enjoyed a ray of sunshine and the sight of a green field. He was roused from his reverie by an unexpected occurrence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

We have said that Goualeuse was sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, at the edge of a deep ditch. Suddenly a man, springing up from the bottom of this hollow, shook the rubbish from him under which he had concealed himself, and burst into a loud fit of laughter. Goualeuse turned round, screaming with alarm. It was the Chourineur.

" Don't be frightened, my girl," said the Chourineur, when he saw her extreme fear, and that she had sought protection from her companion. " Ah! Master Rodolph, here's a curious meeting, which I am sure neither you nor I expected." Then he added in a serious tone, " Listen, master. People may say what they like, but there is something in the air,—there, up there, above our heads, very wonderful; which seems to say to a man, 'Go where I send you.' See how you two have been sent here. It is devilish wonderful!"

" What are you doing there?" said Rodolph, greatly surprised.

" I was on the look-out in a matter of yours, master; but, thunder and lightning! what a high joke that you should come at this particular moment into this very neighbourhood of my country-house! There's something in all this—decidedly there is something."

" But again I ask you, what are you doing there?"

" All in good time, I'll tell you; only let me first look about me for a moment."

The Chourineur then ran towards the coach, which was some distance

off, looked this way and that way over the plain with a keen and rapid glance, and then rejoined Rodolph, running quickly.

"Will you explain to me the meaning of all this?"

"Patience, patience, good master; one word more. What's o'clock?"

"Half-past twelve," said Rodolph, looking at his watch.

"All right; we have time, then. The Chouette will not be here for the next half hour."

"The Chouette!" cried Rodolph and the girl both at once.

"Yes, the Chouette; in two words, master, I'll tell you all. Yesterday, after you had left the *tapis-franc*, there came ——"

"A tall man with a woman in man's attire, who asked for me; I know all about that, but then ——"

"Then they paid for my liquor, and wanted to *draw* me about you. I had nothing to tell them, because you had communicated nothing to me, except those fisticuffs which settled me. All I know is, that I learned something then which I shall not easily forget. But we are friends for life and death, Master Rodolph, though the devil burn me if I know why. I feel for you the regard which the bull-dog feels for his master. It was after you told me that I had 'heart and honour;' but that's nothing, so there's an end of it. It is no use trying to account for it; so it is, and so let it be, if it's any good to you."

"Many thanks, my man; but go on."

"The tall man and the little lady in men's clothes, finding that they could get nothing out of me, left the ogress's, and so did I; they going towards the Palais de Justice, and I to Notre Dame. On reaching the end of the street I found it was raining pitchforks, points downwards—a complete deluge. There was an old house in ruins close at hand, and I said to myself, If this shower is to last all night, I shall sleep as well here as in my own crib. So I rolled myself into a sort of cave, where I was high and dry; my bed was an old beam, and my pillow a heap of lath and plaster, and there I slept like a king."

"Well, well, go on."

"We had drank together, Master Rodolph, I had drank, too, with the tall man and the little woman dressed in man's clothes, so you may believe my head was rather heavy, and, besides, nothing sends me off to sleep like a good fall of rain. I began then to snooze, but I had not been long asleep, I think, when, aroused by a noise, I sat up and listened. I heard the Schoolmaster, who was talking in a friendly tone with somebody. I soon made out that he was parleying with the tall man who came into the *tapis-franc* with the little woman dressed in man's clothes."

"They in conference with the Schoolmaster and the Chouette?" said Rodolph, with amazement.

"With the Schoolmaster and the Chouette; and they agreed to meet again on the morrow."

"That's to-day!" said Rodolph.

"At one o'clock."

"This very moment!"

"Where the road branches off to Saint-Denis and La Revolte."

"This very spot!"

"Just as you say, Master Rodolph, on this very spot."

"The Schoolmaster! oh, pray be on your guard, Monsieur Rodolph," exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie.

"Don't be alarmed, my child, he won't come; it's only the Chouette."

"How could the man who, with the female in disguise, sought me at the *tapis-franc*, come into contact with these two wretches?" said Rodolph.

"I'faith I don't know, and I think I only awoke at the end of the affair, for the tall man was talking of getting back his pocket-book, which the Chouette was to bring here in exchange for five hundred francs. I should say that the Schoolmaster had begun by robbing him, and that it was after that that they begun to parley, and to come to friendly terms."

"It is very strange."

"*Mon Dieu!* it makes me quite frightened on your account, Monsieur Rodolph," said Fleur-de-Marie.

"Master Rodolph is no chicken, girl; but, as you say, there may be something working against him, and so I am here."

"Go on, my good fellow."

"The tall man and the little woman have promised two thousand francs to the Schoolmaster to do to you—I don't know what. The Chouette is to be here directly to return the pocket-book, and to know what is required from them, which she is to tell the Schoolmaster, who will undertake it."

Fleur-de-Marie started. Rodolph smiled disdainfully.

"Two thousand francs to do something to you, Master Rodolph; that makes me think that when I see a notice of a dog that has been lost (I don't mean to make a comparison), and the offer of a hundred francs reward for his discovery, I say to myself, 'Animal, if you were lost, no one would give a hundred farthings to find you.' Two thousand francs to do something to you! Who are you, then?"

"I'll tell you by and by."

"That's enough, master. When I heard this proposal, I said to myself, I must find out where these two dons live who want to set the Schoolmaster on the haunches of M. Rodolph; it may be serviceable. So when they had gone away, I got out of my hiding-place, and followed them quietly. I saw the tall man and little woman get into a coach near Notre Dame, and I got up behind, and we went on until we reached the Boulevard de l'Observatoire. It was as dark as the mouth of an oven, and I could not distinguish any thing, so I cut a notch in a tree, that I might find out the place in the morning."

"Well thought of, my good fellow."

"This morning I went there, and about ten yards from the tree I saw a narrow entrance, closed by a gate. In the mud there were little and large footsteps, and at the end of the entrance a small garden-gate, where the traces ended; so the roosting-place of the tall man and the little woman must be there."

"Thanks, my worthy friend, you have done me a most essential piece of service, without knowing it."

"I beg your pardon, Master Rodolph, but I believed I was serving you, and that was the reason I did as I did."

"I know it, my fine fellow, and I wish I could recompense your service more properly than by thanks; but, unfortunately, I am only a poor

devil of a workman, although you say they offer two thousand francs for something to be done against me. I will explain that to you."

"Yes, if you like, but not unless. Somebody threatens you with something, and I will come across them if I can; the rest is your affair."

"I know what they want. Listen to me. I have a secret for cutting fans in ivory by a mechanical process, but this secret does not belong to me alone. I am awaiting my comrade to go to work, and, no doubt, it is the model of the machine which I have at home that they are desirous of getting from me at any price, for there is a great deal of money to be made by this discovery."

"The tall man and the little woman then are ——"

"Workpeople with whom I have been associated, and to whom I have refused my secret."

This explanation appeared satisfactory to the Chourineur, whose apprehension was not the clearest in the world, and he replied,—

"Now I understand it all. The beggars! you see they have not the courage to do their dirty tricks themselves. But to come to the end of my story. I said to myself this morning, I know the rendezvous of the Chouette and the tall man; I will go there and wait for them; I have good legs, and my employer will wait for me. I came here, found this hole, and taking an armfull of stuff from the dunghill yonder, I hid myself here up to my nose, and waited for the Chouette. But, lo and behold! you came into the field, and poor Goualeuse came and sat down on the very edge of my park, and then I determined to have a bit of fun, and, jumping out of my lair, I called out like a man on fire."

"And now what do you propose to do?"

"To wait for the Chouette, who is sure to come first; to try and overhear what she and the tall man talk about, for that may be useful for you to know. There is nothing in the field but this trunk of a tree, and from here you may see all over the plain; it is as if it was made on purpose to sit down upon. The rendezvous of the Chouette is only four steps off at the cross road, and I will lay a bet they come and sit here when they arrive. If I cannot hear any thing, then, as soon as they separate, I will follow the Chouette, who is sure to stay last, and I'll pay her the old grudge I owe her for the Goualeuse's tooth; and I'll twist her neck until she tells me the name of the parents of the poor girl, for she says she knows them. What do you think of my idea, Master Rodolph?"

"I like it very well, my lad; but there is one part which you must alter."

"Oh! Chourineur, do not get yourself into any quarrel on my account. If you beat the Chouette, then the Schoolmaster——"

"Say no more, my lass. The Chouette shall not go scot free for me. Confound it! why, for the very reason that the Schoolmaster will defend her, I will double her dose."

"Listen, my man, to me; I have a better plan for avenging the Chouette's brutalities to Goualeuse, which I will tell you hereafter. Now," said Rodolph, moving a few paces from Goualeuse, and speaking low, "Now, will you render me a real service?"

"Name it, Master Rodolph."

"The Chouette does not know you?"

"I saw her yesterday for the first time at the *tapis-franc*."

"This is what you must do. Hide yourself first; but, when you see her come close to you, get out of this hole——"

"And twist her neck?"

"No, defer that for a time. To-day, only prevent her from speaking to the tall man. He, seeing some one with her, will not approach; and if he does, do not leave her alone for a moment. He cannot make his proposal before you."

"If the man thinks me curious, I know what to do; he is neither the Schoolmaster nor Master Rodolph. I will follow the Chouette like her shadow, and the man shall not say a word that I do not overhear. He will then be off, and after that I will have one little turn with the Chouette. I must have it; it will be such a sweet drop for me."

"Not yet; the one-eyed hag does not know whether you are a thief or not?"

"No, not unless the Schoolmaster has talked of me to her, and told her that I did not do business in that line."

"If he have, you must appear to have altered your ideas on that subject."

"I?"

"Yes."

"Ten thousand thunders! Mr. Rodolph, what do you mean? indeed —truly—I don't like it; it does not suit me to play such a farce as that."

"You shall only do what you please; but you will not find that I shall suggest any infamous plan to you. The tall man, once driven away, you must try and talk over the Chouette. As she will be very savage at having missed the good haul she expected, you must try and smooth her down by telling her that you know of a capital bit of business which may be done, and that you are then waiting for your comrade, and that, if the Schoolmaster will join you, there is a lump of money to be made."

"Well, well."

"After waiting with her for an hour, you may say, 'My mate does not come, and so the job must be put off;' and then you may make an appointment with the Chouette and the Schoolmaster for to-morrow, at an early hour. Do you understand me?"

"Quite."

"And this evening, at ten o'clock, meet me at the corner of the Champs Elysées, and the Allée des Veuves, and I will tell you more."

"If it is a trap, look out!—the Schoolmaster is a scoundrel. You have beaten him, and, no doubt, he will kill you if he can."

"Have no fear."

"By Jove! it is a *rum start;* but do as you like with me. I do not hesitate, for something tells me that there is a rod in pickle for the Schoolmaster and the Chouette. One word, though, if you please, M. Rodolph."

"Say it."

"I do not think you are the man to lay a trap, and set the police on the Schoolmaster. He is an arrant blackguard, who deserves a hundred deaths; but to have them arrested, that I will not have a hand in."

"Nor I, my boy; but I have a score to wipe off with him and the

Chouette, because they are in a plot with others against me; but we two will baffle them completely, if you will lend me your assistance."

"Of course I will; and, if that is to be the game, I am your man. But quick, quick," cried the Chourineur, "down there I see the head of

the Chouette. I know it is her bonnet. Go, go, and I will drop into my hole."

"To-night, then, at ten o'clock."

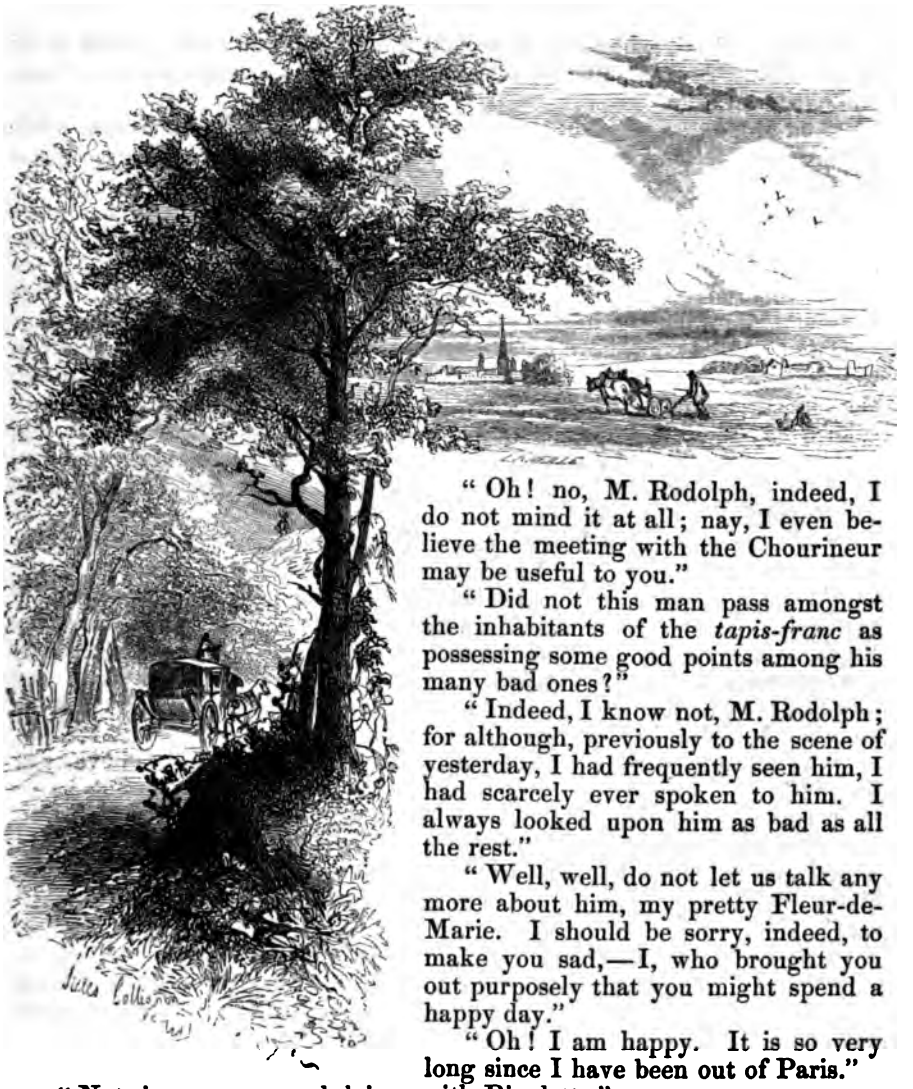
"At the corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allée des Veuves: all right."

Fleur-de-Marie had not heard a word of the latter part of the conversation between the Chourineur and Rodolph, and now entered again into the coach with her travelling companion.

CHAPTER X.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

For some time after this conversation with the Chourineur, Rodolph remained preoccupied and pensive, while Fleur-de-Marie, too timid to break the silence, continued to gaze on him with saddened earnestness. At length Rodolph looked up, and, meeting her mournful look, smiled kindly on her, and said, "What are you thinking of, my child? I fear our rencontre with the Chourineur has made you uncomfortable, and we were so merry, too."



"Oh! no, M. Rodolph, indeed, I do not mind it at all; nay, I even believe the meeting with the Chourineur may be useful to you."

"Did not this man pass amongst the inhabitants of the *tapis-franc* as possessing some good points among his many bad ones?"

"Indeed, I know not, M. Rodolph; for although, previously to the scene of yesterday, I had frequently seen him, I had scarcely ever spoken to him. I always looked upon him as bad as all the rest."

"Well, well, do not let us talk any more about him, my pretty Fleur-de-Marie. I should be sorry, indeed, to make you sad,—I, who brought you out purposely that you might spend a happy day."

"Oh! I am happy. It is so very long since I have been out of Paris."

"Not since your grand doings with Rigolette."

"Yes, indeed, M. Rodolph; but that was in the spring. Yet, though it is now autumn, I enjoy it quite as much. How beautifully the sun shines!—only look at the gold-coloured clouds out there—there, I mean; and then that hill, with its pretty white houses half hid among the trees, and the leaves still so green, though we are in the middle of the month of October. Do not you think it is wonderful, M. Rodolph, they should so well preserve their verdure? In Paris, all the leaves wither so soon. Look! look at those pigeons! how many there are! and how high they fly! Now, they are settling on that old mill. One is never tired in the open fields of looking at all these amusing sights."

"It is, indeed, a pleasure to behold the delight you seem to take in all these trifling matters, Fleur-de-Marie; though they, in reality, constitute the charm of a landscape."

And Rodolph was right; for the countenance of his companion, while gazing upon the fair calm scene before her, was lit up with an expression of the purest joy.

"See!" she exclaimed, after intently watching the different objects that unfolded themselves to her eager look,—"see how beautifully the clear white smoke rises from those cottages, and ascends to the very clouds themselves; and there are some men ploughing the land. What a capital plough they have got, drawn by those two fine grey horses. Oh! if I were a man, how I should like to be a husbandman, to go out in the fields, and drive one's own plough; and then, when you look to see the blue skies, and the green shiny leaves of the neighbouring forests,—such a day as to-day, for instance, when you feel half inclined to weep, without knowing why, and begin singing old and melancholy songs, like *Geneviève de Brabant*. Do you know 'Geneviève de Brabant,' M. Rodolph?"

"No, my child; but I hope you will have the kindness to sing it to me before the day is over. You know our time is all our own."

At these words, which reminded the poor Goualeuse that her newly tasted happiness was fast fleeting away, and that, at the close of this, the brightest day that had ever shone on her existence, she must return to all the horrors of a corrupt city, her feelings broke through all restraint, she hid her face in her hands and burst into tears. Much surprised at her emotion, Rodolph kindly inquired its cause.

"What ails you, Fleur-de-Marie? What fresh grief have you found?"

"Nothing—nothing indeed, M. Rodolph," replied the girl, drying her eyes and trying to smile. "Pray forgive me for being so sad, and please not to notice it. I assure you I have nothing at all to grieve about—it is only a fancy; and now I am going to be quite gay you will see."

"And you were as gay as could be a few minutes ago."

"Yes, I know I was; and it was my thinking how soon ——" answered Fleur-de-Marie naïvely, and raising her large, tearful blue eyes, with touching candour, to his face.

The look, the words, fully enlightened Rodolph as to the cause of her distress, and, wishing to dissipate it, he said, smilingly,—

"I would lay a wager you are regretting your poor rose-tree, and are crying because you could not bring it out walking with you, as you used to do."

La Goualeuse fell into the good-natured scheme for regaining her cheerfulness, and by degrees the clouds of sadness cleared away from her fair young face; and once again she appeared absorbed in the pleasure of the moment, without allowing herself to recollect the future that would succeed it. The vehicle had by this time almost arrived at Saint Denis, and the tall spires of the cathedral were visible.

"Oh, what a fine steeple!" exclaimed La Goualeuse.

" It is that of the splendid church of Saint Denis: would you like to see it? we can easily stop our carriage."

Poor Fleur-de-Marie cast down her eyes. " From the hour I went to live with the ogress," said she, in a low tone, while deep blushes dyed her cheek, " I never once entered a church—I durst not. When in prison, on the contrary, I used to delight in helping to sing the mass;

and, against the Fête-Dieu, oh! I made such lovely bouquets for the altar."

" But God is merciful and good; why, then, fear to pray to Him, or to enter His holy church?"

"Oh! no, no, Monsieur Rodolph. I have offended God deeply enough: let me not add impiety and sacrilege to my sins."

After a moment's silence, Rodolph again renewed the conversation, and, kindly taking the hand of La Goualeuse, said, "Fleur-de-Marie, tell me honestly, have you ever known what it is to love?"

"Never, Monsieur Rodolph."

"And how do you account for this?"

"You saw the kind of persons who frequented the *tapis-franc*. And then, to love, the object should be good and virtuous ——"

"Why do you think so?"

"Oh! because one's lover, or husband, would be all in all to us, and we should seek no greater happiness than in devoting our life to him. But, Monsieur Rodolph, if you please, we will talk of something else, for the tears will come into my eyes."

"Willingly, Fleur-de-Marie: let us change the conversation. And now tell me, why do you look so beseechingly at me with those large, tearful eyes? Have I done any thing to displease you?"

"On the contrary, 'tis the excess of your goodness that makes me weep; indeed, I could almost fancy that you had brought me out solely for my individual pleasure and enjoyment, without thinking of yourself. Not content with your generous defence of me yesterday, you have to-day procured for me happiness such as I never hoped to enjoy."

"You are, then, truly and entirely happy?"

"Never, never shall I forget to-day."

"Happiness does not often attend us on earth," said Rodolph, sighing.

"Alas, no! Seldom, perhaps never."

"For my own part, to make up for a want of reality in its possession, I often amuse myself with pictures of what I would have if I could, saying to myself, This is how and where I should like to live—this is the sort of income I should like to enjoy. Have you never, my little Fleur-de-Marie, amused yourself with building similar 'castles in the air?'"

"Yes, formerly, when I was in prison, before I went to live with the ogress—then I used to do nothing all day but dance, sing, and build these faëry dreams: but I very seldom do so now. Tell me, Monsieur Rodolph, if you could have any wish you liked, what should you most desire?"

"Oh, I should like to be rich, with plenty of servants and carriages; to possess a splendid hôtel, and to mix in the first circles of fashion; to be able to obtain any amusement I pleased, and to go to the theatres and opera whenever I chose."

"Well, then, you would be more unreasonable than I should. Now I will tell you exactly what would satisfy me in every respect: first of all, sufficient money to clear myself with the ogress, and to keep me till I could obtain work for my future support; then a pretty, little, nice, clean room, all to myself, from the window of which I could see the trees while I sat at my work."

"Plenty of flowers in your casement, of course?"

"Oh, certainly! And, if it could be managed, to live in the country always. And that, I think, is all I should want."

"Let me see: a little room, and work enough to maintain you—

those are positive necessaries; but, when one is merely wishing, there is no harm in adding a few superfluities: should you not like such nice things as carriages, diamonds, and rich clothes?"

"Not at all! All I wish for is my free and undisturbed liberty—a country life, and the certainty of not dying in an hospital. Oh, that idea is dreadful! Above all things, I would desire the certainty of its never being my fate. Oh! Monsieur Rodolph, that dread often comes across me and fills me with terror."

"Alas! poor folks, such as we are, should not shrink from such things."

"'Tis not the dying in a charitable institution I dread, or the poverty that would send me into it, but the thoughts of what they do to your lifeless remains."

"What do they do that shocks you so much?"

"Is it possible, Monsieur Rodolph, you have never been told what will become of you if you die in one of those places?"

"No, indeed, I have not: do you tell me."

"Well, then, I knew a young girl who had been a sort of companion to me when I was in prison; she afterwards died in an hospital, and what

do you think?—her body was given to the surgeons for dissection!" murmured the shuddering Fleur-de-Marie.

"That is, indeed, a frightful idea! And do these miserable anticipations often trouble you, my poor girl?"

"Ah, Monsieur Rodolph, it surprises you that, after my unhappy life, I can feel any concern as to what becomes of my miserable remains! God knows, the feeling which makes me shrink from such an outrage to modesty is all my wretched fate has left me!"

The mournful tone in which these words were uttered, and the bitter feelings they contained, went to the heart of Rodolph; but his companion, quickly perceiving his air of deep dejection, and blaming herself for having caused it, said, timidly,—

"Monsieur Rodolph, I feel that I am behaving very ill and ungratefully towards you, who so kindly brought me out to amuse me and give me pleasure; in return for which I only keep talking to you about all the dull and gloomy things I can think of! I wonder how I can do so! —to be able even to recollect my misery, when all around me smiles and looks so gay! I cannot tell how it is, words seem to rise from my lips in spite of myself; and, though I feel happier to-day than I ever did before in my life, my eyes are continually filling with tears! You are not angry with me, are you, Monsieur Rodolph? See, too, my sadness is going away as suddenly as it came. There now, it is all gone, and shall not return to vex you any more, I am determined. Look, Monsieur Rodolph, just look at my eyes—they do not shew that I have been crying, do they?"

And here Fleur-de-Marie, having repeatedly closed her eyes to get rid of the rebellious tears that would gather there, opened them full upon Rodolph, with a look of most enchanting candour and sweetness.

"Put no restraint on yourself, I beseech you, Fleur-de-Marie: be gay, if you really feel so; or sad, if sadness most suits your present state of mind. I have my own hours of gloom and melancholy, and my sufferings would be much increased were I compelled to feign a lightness of heart I did not really possess."

"Can it be possible, Monsieur Rodolph, that you are ever sad?"

"Quite possible, my child, and true. Alas! the prospect before me is but little brighter than your own. I, like you, am without friends or parents; what would become of me if I were to fall ill and be unable to earn my daily bread, for I need scarcely tell you I live but from day to day, and spend my money quite as fast as I obtain it?"

"Oh, but that is wrong, Monsieur Rodolph—very, very wrong!" said La Goualeuse, in a tone of such deep and grave remonstrance as made him smile. "You should always lay by something. Look at me: why, all my troubles and misfortunes have happened because I did not save my money more carefully. If once a person can get a hundred francs beforehand, he need never fear falling into any one's power: generally, a difficulty about money puts very evil thoughts into our head."

"All that is very wise and very sensible, my frugal little friend; but a hundred francs!—that is a large sum—how could a man like myself ever amass so much?"

"Why, M. Rodolph, it is really very easy, if you will but consider a little. First of all, I think you said you could earn five francs a-day?"

"Yes, so I can, when I choose to work."

"Ah! but you should work, constantly and regularly; and yours is such a pretty trade. To paint fans! how nice such work must be—mere amusement, quite a recreation! I cannot think why you should ever be tired or dull. Indeed, Monsieur Rodolph, I must tell you plainly I do not pity you at all; and, besides, really you talk like a mere child when

you say you cannot save money out of such large earnings," added La Goualeuse, in a sweet but, for her, severe tone. "Why, a workman may live well upon three francs a-day; there remain forty sous: at the end of a month, if you manage prudently, you will have saved sixty francs. Think of that! There's a sum!—sixty francs in one month!"

"Oh! but one likes to shew off sometimes, and to indulge in a little idleness."

"There now, M. Rodolph, I declare you make me quite angry to hear you talk so childishly! Pray let me advise you to be wiser."

"Come, then, my sage little monitress, I will be a good boy, and listen to all your careful advice. And your idea of saving, too, is a remarkably good one: I never thought of it before."

"Really!" exclaimed the poor girl, clapping her hands with joy. "Oh, if you knew how delighted I am to hear you say so! Then you will begin from to-day to lay by the forty sous we were talking about, will you? Will you, indeed?"

"I give you my honour that, from this very hour, I will resolve to follow up your most excellent plan, and save forty sous out of each day's pay."

"Are you quite, quite sure you will?"

"Nay, have I not promised you that I will?"

"You will see how proud and happy you will be with your first savings; and that is not all —— Ah, if you would promise not to be angry!"

"Do I look as though I could be so unkind, Fleur-de-Marie, as to find fault with any thing you said?"

"Oh! no, indeed, that you do not: only I hardly know whether I ought ——"

"You ought to tell me every thing you think or feel, Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well, then, I was wondering how *you*, who, it is easily seen, are above your condition, can frequent such low cabarets as that kept by the ogress."

"Had I not done so, I should not have had the pleasure of wandering in the fields with you to-day, my dear Fleur-de-Marie."

"That is, indeed, true, M. Rodolph; but, still, it does not alter my first opinion. No, much as I enjoy to-day's treat, I would cheerfully give up all thoughts of ever passing such another if I thought it could in any way injure you."

"Injure me! Far from it! Think of the excellent advice you have been giving me."

"Which you have promised me to follow?"

"I have; and I pledge my word of honour to save henceforward at least forty sous a-day." Thus speaking, Rodolph called out to the driver of their vehicle, who was passing the village of Sarcelles, "Take the first road to the right—cross Villiers to Bel—turn to the left—then keep along quite straight."

"Now," said Rodolph, turning to his companion, "that I am a good boy, and promised to do all you tell me, let us go back to our diversion of building castles in the air: that does not run away with much money. You will not object to such a method of amusing myself, will you?"

"Oh! no, build as many as you like—they are very cheaply raised, and very easily knocked down when you are tired of them. Now, then, you begin."

"Well, then —— No! Fleur-de-Marie, you shall build up yours first."

"I wonder if you could guess what I should choose, if wishing were all, M. Rodolph."

"Let us try. Suppose that this road—I say *this* road, because we happen to be on it ——"

"Yes, yes; of course: this road is as good as any other."

"Well, then, I say, I suppose that this road leads to a delightful little village, at a considerable distance from the highroad ——"

"Oh, yes! that makes it so much more still and quiet!"

"It is built facing the south, and half surrounded by trees ——"

"And close by flows a gentle river."

"Exactly!—a clear, gently flowing river. At the end of this village stands a pretty farm, with a nice orchard on one side of it, and a garden, filled with flowers, on the other ——"

"That farm shall be called my farm, to which we will pretend we are now going."

"Just so."

"And where we know we shall get some delicious milk to drink after our journey!"

"Milk, indeed! Excellent cream, and newly laid eggs, if you please."

"And where we would be glad to stay all our lives!"

"All our lives! Quite right—go on."

"And then we should go and see all the cows!"

"To be sure we should."

"And afterwards visit the dairy?"

"Visit the dairy! Yes."

"Then the pigeon-house?"

"Yes, so we should."

"Oh, how very, very nice, only to think of such things!"

"But let me finish the description of the farm ——"

"Yes, pray do! I quite forgot that."

"Well, then, the ground-floor contains two rooms; one, a large kitchen for the farm-servants, and the other for the owner of the place."

"Make that room have green blinds, M. Rodolph—do, pray: they are so cool, and look so pretty!"

"Yes, yes—green blinds to the windows. I quite agree with you—they do look uncommonly pretty, and set off a place so well! Of course, the person tenanting this farm is your aunt."

"Of course she is my aunt, and a very good, sensible, kind woman, M. Rodolph, is she not?"

"Particularly so, and loves you like her own child."

"Dear, good aunt! Oh, how delightful to have some one to love us!"

"And you return the tender affection she bears you?"

"Oh, with all my heart!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven with an expression impossible to describe. "And I should help her to work—to attend to the family

linen—to keep every thing neat and clean—to store up the summer fruits against winter —— Oh, she should never have to complain that I was idle, I promise! First of all, in the morning ——"

"Wait a bit, Fleur-de-Marie: you are in too great a hurry. I want to finish describing the house to you: never mind your aunt just yet."

"Ah, ha, Mr. Painter! all this is taken from some pretty landscape you have been painting on a fan. Now I know what makes you so expert at describing it!" said La Goualeuse, laughing merrily at her own little jest.

"You little chatterer, be quiet! will you?"

"Yes, I am a chatterer, indeed, to interrupt you so often, Monsieur Rodolph; but pray go on, and I will not speak again till you have finished painting this dear farm."

"Your room is on the first floor ——"

"My room! how charming! Oh, go on—go on, please, M. Rodolph, and describe all about it to me!" And the delighted girl opened her large laughing eyes, and pressed more closely against Rodolph, as if she expected to see the picture in his hand.

"Your chamber has two windows looking out upon the flower-garden, and a small meadow, watered by the river we mentioned. On the opposite bank of the stream rises a small hill, planted with fine old chestnut-trees; and from amongst them peeps out the village church ——"

"Oh, how beautiful—how very beautiful, M. Rodolph! It makes one quite long to be there."

"Three or four fine cows are grazing in the meadow, which is only separated from the garden by a hedge of honeysuckle ——"

"And from my windows I can see the cows?"

"Perfectly."

"And one among them ought to be my favourite, you know, M. Rodolph; and I ought to put a little bell round its neck, and use it to feed out of my hands!"

"Of course she would come when you called her. Let me see, what name shall we give her? Suppose we say, MUSETTE. Do you like that? She shall be very young and gentle, and entirely white."

"Oh, what a pretty name! Musette! Ah! Musette, Musette, I shall be always feeding you and patting you to make you know me."

"Now we will finish the inside of your apartment, Fleur-de-Marie. The curtains and furniture are green, like the blinds; and outside the window grow an enormous rose-tree and honeysuckle, which entirely cover this side of the farm, and so surround your casements, that you have only to stretch out your hand to gather a large bunch of roses and honeysuckle wet with the early morning dew."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, what a good painter you are!"

"Now this is the way you will pass your day ——"

"Yes, yes, let us see how I shall employ myself all day."

"Early in the morning your good aunt wakes you with a tender kiss; she brings with her a bowl of new milk, just warm, which she prays you to drink, as she fancies you are delicate about the lungs, poor dear child! Well, you do as she wishes you; then rise, and take a walk round the farm; pay a visit to Musette, the poultry, your pets the pigeons, the flowers in the garden, till nine o'clock, when your writing-master arrives ——"

"My writing-master?"

"Why, you know, unless you learned such necessary things as reading, writing, and accounts, you would not be able to assist your aunt to keep her books relative to the produce of the farm."

"Oh, to be sure! How very stupid of me not to recollect that I must learn to write well, if I wished to help my aunt!" cried the young girl, so thoroughly absorbed in the picture of this peaceful life as to believe for the moment in its reality.

"After your lesson is concluded, you will occupy yourself in household matters, or embroider some pretty little article of dress for yourself; then you will practise your writing for an hour or two, and, when that is done, join your aunt in her round of visits to the different operations of the farm: in the summer, to see how the reapers get on in the hayfield; in harvest-time, to observe the reapers, and afterwards to enjoy the delight with which the gleaners pick up the scattered ears of grain: by this time you will have almost tired yourself, and gathering a large handful of wild herbs, carefully selected by you as the known favourites of your dear Musette, you turn your steps homewards ——"

"But we go back through the meadow, dear Monsieur Rodolph, do we not?" inquired La Goualeuse, as earnestly as though every syllable her ears drank in was to be effectually brought to pass.

"Oh! yes, by all means; and there happens, fortunately, to be a nice little bridge, by which the river separating the farm-land from the meadow may be crossed. By the time you reach home, upon my word, it is seven o'clock; and, as the evenings begin to be a little chill, a bright

cheerful fire is blazing in the large farm kitchen: you go in there for a few minutes, just to warm yourself and to speak a few kind words to the honest labourers, who are enjoying a hearty meal after the day's toil is over. Then you sit down to dinner with your aunt; sometimes the curé, or a neighbouring farmer, is invited to share the meal. After dinner you read or work, while your aunt and her guest have a friendly game at

piquet. At ten o'clock she dismisses you, with a kiss and a blessing, to your chamber: you retire to your room; offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Great Author of all your happiness; then sleep soundly till morning, when the same routine begins again."

"Oh! Monsieur Rodolph, one might lead such a life as that for a hundred years, without ever knowing one moment's weariness."

"But that is not all. There are Sundays and fête-days to be thought of."

"Yes; and how should we pass those?"

"Why, you would put on your holyday dress, with one of those pretty little caps *à la paysanne*, which all admit you look so very nicely in, and accompany your aunt in her large old-fashioned chaise, driven by James the farm-servant, to hear mass in the village-church; after which, during summer, your kind relative would take you to the different fêtes given in the adjoining parishes. You, so gentle, so modest and good-looking, so tenderly beloved by your aunt, and so well spoken of by the curé for all the virtues and qualifications which make a good wife, will have no scarcity of offers for your hand in the dance—indeed, all the principal young farmers will be anxious to secure you as a partner, by way of opening an acquaintance which shall last for life. By degrees you begin to remark one more than the others; you perceive his deep desire to attract your undivided attention, and so——" And here Rodolph,

struck by the continued silence of La Goualeuse, looked up at her. Alas! the poor girl was endeavouring, though fruitlessly, to choke the deep sobs which almost suffocated her. For a brief period, carried away by the words of Rodolph, the bright future presented to her mental vision had effaced the horrible present: but too quickly did the hideous picture return, and sweep away for ever the dear delight of believing so sweet, so calm an existence, could ever be hers.

"Fleur-de-Marie," asked Rodolph, in a kind and affectionate tone, "why is this? why these tears?"

"Ah! M. Rodolph, you have unintentionally caused me much pain. Foolish girl that I was, I had listened to you till I quite fancied this paradise were a true picture."

"And so it is, my dear child! This paradise, as you call it, is no fiction."

"Stop, coachman!"

"Now look! see! observe where we are!"

As the carriage stopped, La Goualeuse, at Rodolph's bidding, mechanically raised her head—they were on the summit of a little hill: what was her surprise, her astonishment, at the scene which revealed itself to her gaze! The pretty village, built facing the south—the farm, the meadow, the beautiful cows, the little winding river, the chestnut grove, the church in the distance!—the whole picture, so vividly painted, was before her eyes. Nothing was wanting—even the milk-white heifer, Musette, her future pet, was peacefully grazing as she had been described. The rich colouring of an October sun gilded the charming

landscape, while the variegated tint of the chestnut-leaves, slightly tinged by the autumnal breezes, stood out in bold relief against the clear blue of the surrounding sky.

"Well, my little Fleur-de-Marie, what do you say to this? Am I a good painter, or not?"

La Goualeuse looked at him with a surprise in which a degree of uneasiness was mingled; all she saw and heard appeared to her to partake largely of the supernatural.

"Monsieur Rodolph," she at length exclaimed, with a bewildered look, "how can this be? Indeed, indeed, I feel afraid to look at it—it is so exactly alike. I cannot believe it is any thing but a dream you have conjured up, and which will quickly pass away. Speak to me! pray do; and tell me what to believe."

"Calm yourself, my dear child! Nothing is more simple or true than what you behold here. The good woman who owns this farm was my nurse, and brought me up here: intending to give myself a treat, I sent to her early this morning to say I was coming to see her. You see I painted after nature."

"You are quite right, M. Rodolph," sighed La Goualeuse. "There is, indeed, nothing but what is quite natural in all this."

The farm to which Rodolph had conducted Fleur-de-Marie was situated at the outer extremity of the village of Bouqueval—a small, isolated, and unknown hamlet, entirely surrounded by its own lands, and about two leagues' distance from Ecouen: the vehicle, following the directions of Rodolph, rapidly descended the hill, and entered a long avenue bordered with apple and cherry-trees, while the wheels rolled noiselessly over the short fine grass with which the unfrequented road was overgrown.

Fleur-de-Marie, whose utmost efforts were unavailing to shake off the painful sensations she experienced, remained so silent and mournful that Rodolph reproached himself with having, by his well-intentioned surprise, been the cause of it. In a few moments more, the carriage, passing by the large entrance to the farm, entered a thick avenue of elm-trees, and stopped before a little rustic porch, half hidden by the luxuriant branches of the vine which clustered round it.

"Now, Fleur-de-Marie, here we are. Are you pleased with what you see?"

"Indeed I am, M. Rodolph. But how shall I venture before the good person you mentioned as living here? Pray do not let her see me —I cannot venture to approach her."

"And why, my child?"

"True, M. Rodolph; I forget she does not know me, and will not guess how unworthy I am." And poor Fleur-de-Marie tried to suppress the deep sigh that would accompany her words.

The arrival of Rodolph had, no doubt, been watched for; the driver had scarcely opened the carriage-door when a prepossessing female, of middle age, dressed in the style of wealthy landholders about Paris, and whose countenance, though melancholy, was also gentle and benevolent in its expression, appeared in the porch, and with respectful eagerness advanced to meet Rodolph.

Poor Goualeuse felt her cheeks flush and her heart beat as she timidly descended from the vehicle.

"Good day, good day, Madame Georges," said Rodolph, advancing towards the individual so addressed, "you see I am punctual." Then

turning to the driver, and putting money into his hand, he said, "Here, my friend, there is no further occasion to detain you; you may return to Paris as soon as you please."

The coachman, a little, short, square-built man, with his hat over his eyes, and his countenance almost entirely concealed by the high collar of his driving-coat, pocketed the money without a word, remounted his seat, gave his horses the whip, and disappeared down the *allée verte* by which he had entered.

Fleur-de-Marie sprung to the side of Rodolph, and with an air of unfeigned alarm, almost amounting to distress, said, in a tone so low as not to be overheard by Madame Georges,—

"Monsieur Rodolph! Monsieur Rodolph! pray do not be angry, but why have you sent away the carriage? Will it not return to fetch us away?"

"Of course not; I have quite done with the man, and therefore dismissed him."

"But the ogress!"

"What of her? Why do you mention her name?"

"Alas! alas! because I must return to her this evening; indeed, indeed, I must, or—or she will consider me a thief. The very clothes I have on are hers, and, besides, I owe her ——"

"Make yourself quite easy, my dear child; it is my part to ask your forgiveness, not you mine."

"My forgiveness! Oh! for what can you require me to pardon you?"

"For not having sooner told you that you no longer owe the ogress any thing; that it rests only with yourself to decide whether you will henceforward make this quiet spot your home, and cast off the garments you now wear for others my kind friend, Madame Georges, will furnish you with. She is much about your height, and can supply you with every thing you require. She is all impatience to commence her part of 'aunt,' I can assure you."

Poor Fleur-de-Marie seemed utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of all she saw and heard, and gazed with wondering and perplexed looks from one companion to the other, as though fearing to trust either her eyes or ears.

"Do I understand you rightly?" she cried at length, half breathless with emotion, "Not go back to Paris? Remain here? And this lady will permit me to stay with her? Oh! it cannot be possible; I dare not hope it; that would, indeed, be to realise our 'castles in the air.'"

"Dear Fleur-de-Marie, your wishes are realised—your dream a true one."

"No, no, you must be jesting; that would be too much happiness to expect, or even dare to hope for."

"Nay, Fleur-de-Marie, we should never find fault with an over-supply of happiness."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, for pity's sake deceive me not; you cannot believe the misery I should experience were you to tell me all this happiness was but a jest."

"My child, listen to me," said Rodolph, with a tone and manner which, although still affectionate, was mingled with a dignified accent and manner Fleur-de-Marie had never previously remarked in him. "I repeat that, if you please, you may from this very hour lead here, with Madame Georges, that peaceful life whose description but a short time since so much delighted you. Though the kind lady with whom you will reside be not your aunt, she will feel for you the most lively and affectionate interest, and with the personages about the farm you will pass as being really and truly her niece, and this innocent deception will render your residence here more agreeable and advantageous. Once more I repeat to you, Fleur-de-Marie, you may now at your own pleasure realise the dream of our journey. As soon as you have assumed your village dress," said Rodolph, smilingly, "we will take you to see that milk-white heifer, Musette, who is to be your favourite henceforward, and who is only waiting for the pretty collar you designed to ornament her with; then we will go and introduce ourselves to your pets, the pigeons, afterwards visit the dairy, and so go on till we have been all over the farm. I mean to keep my promise in every respect, I assure you."

Fleur-de-Marie pressed her hands together with earnest gratitude,—surprise, joy, and the deepest thankfulness, mingled with respect, lit up her beautiful countenance, while, with eyes streaming with tears, she exclaimed,—

"M. Rodolph, you are, you must be, one of those beneficent angels sent by the Almighty to do good upon earth, and to rescue poor fallen creatures, like myself, from shame and misery.'"

"My poor girl," replied Rodolph, with a smile of deep sadness and

ineffable kindness, "though still young, I have already deeply suffered. I lost a dear child, who, if living, would now be about your age. Let that explain my deep sympathy with all who suffer, and for yourself particularly, Fleur-de-Marie, or, rather, *Marie* only. Now, go with Madame Georges, who will shew you the pretty chamber, with its clustering roses and honeysuckle to form your morning bouquets. Yes, Marie, henceforward let that name, simple and sweet as yourself, be your only appellation. Before my departure we will have some talk together, and then I shall quit you, most happy in the knowledge of your full contentment."

Fleur-de-Marie, without one word of reply, gracefully bent her knee, and, before Rodolph could prevent her, gently and respectfully raised his hand to her lips; then rising with an air of modest submission, followed Madame Georges, who eyed her with a profound interest, out of the room.

CHAPTER XI.

MURPHY AND RODOLPH.

Upon quitting the house, Rodolph bent his steps towards the farm-yard, where he found the individual who, the preceding evening, disguised as a charcoal-man, had warned him of the arrival of Tom and Sarah. Murphy, which was the name of this personage, was about fifty years of age; his head, nearly bald, was still ornamented with a fringe of light brown hair at each side, which the hand of time had here and there

slightly tinged with grey; his face was broad, open, and ruddy, and free from all appearance of hair, except very short whiskers, of a reddish colour, only reaching as low as the tip of the ear, from which it diverged, and stretched itself in a gentle curve across his rubicund cheeks. Spite of his years and *embonpoint*, Murphy was active and athletic; his countenance, though somewhat phlegmatic, was expressive of great resolution and kindliness of nature; he wore a white neck-handkerchief, a deep waistcoat, and a long black coat, with very wide skirts; his breeches, of an olive-green colour, corresponded in material with the gaiters which protected his sturdy legs, without reaching entirely to the knee, but allowing the strings belonging to his upper garment to display themselves in long unstudied bows; in fact, the dress and whole *tournure* of Murphy exactly accorded with the idea of what in England is styled a "gentleman farmer." Now, the personage we are describing, though an English

squire, was no farmer. At the moment of Rodolph's appearance in the yard, Murphy was in the act of depositing, in the pocket of a small travelling *caleche*, a pair of small pistols he had just been carefully cleaning.

"What the devil are you going to do with those pistols?" inquired Rodolph.

"That is my business, my lord," replied Murphy, descending the carriage steps; "attend to your affairs, and I will mind mine."

"At what o'clock have you ordered the horses?"

"According to your directions—at nightfall."

"You got here this morning, I suppose?"

"I did, at eight o'clock. Madame Georges has had ample time to make all the preparations you desired."

"What has gone wrong, Murphy? you seem completely out of humour. Have I done any thing to offend you?"

"Can you not, my lord, accomplish your self-imposed task without incurring so much personal risk?"

"Surely, in order to lull all suspicion in the minds of the persons I seek to understand and fully appreciate, I cannot do better than, for a time, to adopt their garb, their language, and their customs."

"But all this did not prevent you, my lord, last night (in that abominable place where we went to unkennel Bras Rouge, in hopes of getting out of him some particulars relative to that unhappy son of Madame Georges), from being angry, and ready to quarrel with me, because I wished to aid in your tussle with the rascal you encountered in that horrid cut-throat alley."

"I suppose, then, Murphy, you do not think I am capable of defending myself, and you either doubt my courage or the strength of my arm?"

"Unfortunately, you have given me too many reasons to form a contrary opinion of both. Thank God! Flatman, the Bertrand of Germany, perfected you in the knowledge of fencing; Tom Cribb taught you to box; Lacour, of Paris, accomplished you in single-stick, wrestling, and slang, so as to render you fully provided for your venturesome excursions. You are bold as a lion, with muscles like iron, and, though so slight in form, I should have no more chance with you than a dray-horse would against a racer, were they to compete with each other. No mistake about that."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"Why, I maintain, my lord, that it is not the right thing for you to throw yourself in the way of all these blackguards. I do not say that because of the nuisance it is to a highly respectable individual of my acquaintance to blacken his face with charcoal, and make himself look like a devil. No, God knows, spite of my age, my figure, and my gravity, I would disguise myself as a rope-dancer, if, by so doing, I could serve you. But I still stick to what I say, and——"

"Oh! I know all you would say, my excellent old fellow, and that when once you have taken an idea into your thick skull, the very devil himself could no more drive it out of you than he could, by all his arts, remove the fidelity and devotion implanted in your brave and valiant heart."

"Come, come, my lord, now you begin to flatter me, I suspect you are up to some fresh mischief."

"Think no such thing, Murphy; give yourself no uneasiness, but leave all to me."

"My lord, I cannot be easy; there is some new folly in hand, and I am sure of it."

"My good friend, you mean well; but you are choosing a very ill hour for your lectures; forbear, I beg."

"And why, my lord, can you not listen to me *now*, as well as any other time?"

"Because you are interfering with one of my short-lived moments of pride and happiness. I am HERE, in this dear spot!"

"Where you have done so much good. I know it. Your '*model farm*,' as you term it, built by you to instruct, to encourage, and to reward deserving labourers, has been of incalculable service to this part of the country. Ordinary men think but of improving their cattle; you, more wisely and benevolently, have directed your exertions for the bettering your fellow-creatures. Nothing can be better; and when you placed Madame Georges at the head of the establishment, you acted with the utmost wisdom and provident good sense. What a woman she is! No, she is an angel!—so good, so firm, so noble, and upright! I am not easily moved, my lord, as you know; but often have I felt my eyes grow moist, as her many trials and misfortunes rise to my recollection. But about your new *protégée*, however, my lord; if you please, we will not say much on that subject. 'The least said is soonest mended,' as the old proverb has it."

"Why not, Murphy?"

"My lord, you will do what you think proper."

"I do what is just," said Rodolph, with an air of impatience.

"What is just, according to your own interpretation."

"What is just before God and my own conscience," replied Rodolph, in a severe tone.

"Well, my lord, this is a point on which we cannot agree, and therefore let us speak no more about it."

"I desire you will continue to talk about it!" cried Rodolph, imperiously.

"I have never been so circumstanced that your royal highness should have to bid me hold my tongue, and I hope I shall not now be ordered to speak when I should be silent," said Murphy, proudly.

"Mr. Murphy!" said Rodolph, with a tone of increased irritation.

"My lord!"

"You know, sir, how greatly I detest any thing like concealment."

"Your royal highness will excuse me, but it suits me to have certain concealments," said Murphy bluntly.

"If I descend to familiarity with you, sir, it is on condition that you, at least, act with entire frankness towards me."

It is impossible to describe the extreme *hauteur* which marked the countenance of Rodolph as he uttered these words.

"I am fifty years of age, I am a gentleman, and your royal highness should not address me in such a tone."

"Be silent!"

"My lord!"

"Be silent! I say."

"Your royal highness does wrong in compelling a man of honour and feeling to recall the services he has rendered to you," said the squire, in a calm tone.

"Have I not repaid those services in a thousand ways?"

It should be stated that Rodolph had not attached to these bitter

words the humiliating sense which could place Murphy in the light of a mercenary; but such, unfortunately, was the esquire's interpretation of them. He became purple with shame, lifted his two clenched hands to his forehead with an expression of deep grief and indignation, and then, in a moment, as by a sudden revulsion of feeling, throwing his eyes on Rodolph, whose noble countenance was convulsed by the violence of extreme disdain, he said, in a faltering voice, and stifling a sigh of the tenderest pity, "My lord, be yourself; you surpass the bounds of reason."

These words impelled Rodolph to the very height of irritation; his glance had even a savage glare in it; his lips were blanched; and, advancing towards Murphy with a threatening aspect, he exclaimed, "Dare you?"

Murphy retreated, and said, in a quick tone, and as if in spite of himself, "My lord, my lord, REMEMBER THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY!"

These words produced a magical effect on Rodolph. His countenance, contracted by anger, now expanded. He looked at Murphy steadfastly, bowed his head, and then, after a moment's silence, murmured, in faltering accents, "Ah! sir, you are now cruel, indeed. I had thought that my repentance—my deep remorse—and yet it is you—you——"

Rodolph could not finish, his voice was stifled; he sunk, subdued, on a stone bench, and concealed his countenance with both his hands.

"My lord," said Murphy, in deep distress, "my good lord, forgive me! Forgive your old and faithful Murphy. It was only when driven to an extremity, and fearing, alas! not for myself, but for you, the consequences of your passion, that I uttered those words. I said them in spite of myself, and with sorrow. My lord, I was wrong to be so sensitive. *Mon Dieu!* who can know your character, your feelings, if I

do not,—I, who have never left you from your childhood! Pray, oh! pray say that you forgive me for having called to your recollection that sad, sad day. Alas! what expiations have you not made——"

Rodolph raised his head, he was very pale, and said to his companion, in a gentle and saddened voice, "Enough, enough, my old friend; I thank you for having, by one word, checked my headlong passion. I make no apologies to you for the severe things I have said; you know well that '*it is a long way from the heart to the lips*,' as the good people at home say. I was wrong; let us say no more on the subject."

"Alas! now we shall be out of spirits for a long time, as if I were not sufficiently unhappy! I only wish to see you roused from your low spirits, and yet I add to them by my foolish tenaciousness. Good Heaven! what's the use of being an honest man, and having grey hairs, if it does not enable us to endure reproaches which we do not deserve?"

"Be it so, be it so; we were both in the wrong, my good old friend," said Rodolph, mildly; "let us forget it, and return to our former conversation. You approved entirely of my establishment of this farm, and the deep interest I have always felt in Madame Georges. You will allow, won't you, that she had merited it by her excellent qualities, her misfortunes, even if she did not belong to the family of Harville,—a family to which my father had vowed eternal gratitude."

"I have always approved of the sentiments which your lordship has entertained for Madame Georges."

"But you are astonished at the interest I take in this poor girl, are you not?"

"Pray, pray, my lord, I was wrong; I was wrong."

"No, I can imagine that appearances have deceived you; but, as you know my life—all my life, and as you aid me always with as much fidelity as courage in my self-inflicted expiation, it is my duty, or, if you like the phrase better, my gratitude, to convince you that I am not acting from a frivolous impulse,"

"Of that I am sure, my lord."

"You know my ideas on the subject of the good which a man ought to do who has the *knowledge*, the *will*, and the *power*. To succour unhappy, but deserving, fellow-creatures is *well;* to seek after those who are struggling against misfortune with energy and honour, and to aid them, sometimes without their knowledge,—to prevent, in right time, misery and temptation, is *better;* to reinstate such perfectly in their own estimation,—to lead back to honesty those who have preserved in purity some generous and ennobling sentiments in the midst of the contempt that withers them, the misery that eats into them, the corruption that encircles them, and, for that end, to brave, in person, this misery, this corruption, this contagion, is *better still;* to pursue, with unalterable hatred, with implacable vengeance, vice, infamy, and crime, whether they be trampling in the mud, or be clothed in purple and fine linen, that is *justice;* but to give aid inconsiderately to well-merited degradation, to prostitute and lavish charity and commiseration, by bestowing help on unworthy and undeserving objects, is most infamous; it is impiety—very sacrilege! it is to doubt the existence of the Almighty; and so, he who acts thus ought to be made to understand."

"My lord, I pray you do not think that I would for a moment assert that you have bestowed your benefits unworthily."

"One word more, my old friend. You know well that the child whose death I daily deplore,—that that daughter whom I should have loved

the more, as her unworthy mother, Sarah, had shewn herself so utterly indifferent about her,—would now have been sixteen years of age, like this unhappy girl. You know, too, that I cannot prevent the deep, and almost painful, sympathy I feel for young girls of that age."

"True, my lord; and I ought so to have interpreted the interest you evince for your *protégée*. Besides, to succour the unfortunate is to honour God."

"It is, my friend, when the objects deserve it; and thus nothing is more worthy of compassion and respect than a woman like Madame Georges, who, brought up by a pious and good mother in the strict observance of all her duties, has never failed—never! and has, moreover, courageously borne herself in the midst of the most severe trials. But is it not to honour God in the most acceptable way, to raise from the dust one of those beings of the finest mould, whom He has been pleased to endow richly? Does not she deserve compassion and respect—yes, respect,—who, unhappy girl! abandoned to her own instinct,—who, tortured, imprisoned, degraded, sullied, has yet preserved, in holiness and pureness of heart, those noble germs of good first implanted by the Almighty? If you had but seen, poor child! how, at the first word of interest expressed for her—the first mark of kindness and right feeling—the most charming natural impulses, the purest tastes, the most refined thoughts, the most poetic ideas, developed themselves abundantly in her ingenuous mind, even as, in the early spring, a thousand wild flowers lift up their heads at the first rays of the sun. In a conversation of about an hour with Fleur-de-Marie, I have discovered treasures of goodness, worth, prudence—yes, prudence, old Murphy. A smile came to my lips, and a

tear in my eye, when, in her gentle and sensible prattle, she urged on me the necessity of saving forty sous a-day, that I might be beyond want or evil temptations. Poor little creature! she said all this with so serious and persuasive a tone. She seemed so delighted to give me good advice, and experienced so extreme a pleasure in hearing me promise to follow it! I was moved even to tears,—and you—it affects you, my old friend."

"It does, my lord; the idea of making you lay by forty sous a-day, thinking you a workman, instead of urging you to spend money on her; that does touch me."

"Hush! here are Madame Georges and Marie. Get all ready for our departure; we must be in Paris in good time."

Thanks to the care of Madame Georges, Fleur-de-Marie was no longer like her former self. A pretty peasant's cap, and two thick braids of light brown hair, encircled her charming face. A large handkerchief of white muslin crossed her bosom, and disappeared under the high fold of a small shot taffetas apron, whose blue and red shades appeared to advantage over a dark nun's dress, which seemed expressly made for her.

The young girl's countenance was calm and composed. Certain feelings of delight produce in the mind an unspeakable sadness—a holy melancholy. Rodolph was not surprised at the gravity of Fleur-de-Marie, he had expected it. Had she been merry and talkative, she would not have

retained so high a place in his good opinion. In the serious and resigned countenance of Madame Georges might easily be traced the indelible marks of long-suffering; but she looked at Fleur-de-Marie with a tenderness and compassion quite maternal, so much gentleness and sweetness did this poor girl evince.

"Here is *my child*, who has come to thank you for your goodness, M. Rodolph," said Madame Georges, presenting Goualeuse to Rodolph.

At the words, "*my child*," Goualeuse turned her large eyes slowly towards her protectress, and contemplated her for some moments with a look of unutterable gratitude.

"Thanks for Marie, my dear Madame Georges; she deserves this kind interest, and always will deserve it."

"M. Rodolph," said Goualeuse, with a trembling voice, "you understand, I know, I feel that you do, that I cannot find any thing to say to you."

"Your emotion tells me all, my child."

"Oh! she feels deeply the good fortune that has come to her so providentially," said Madame Georges, deeply affected; "her first impulse on entering my room was to prostrate herself before my crucifix."

"Because now, thanks to you, M. Rodolph, I dare to pray," said Goualeuse.

Murphy turned away hastily; his pretensions to firmness would not allow of any one seeing to what extent the simple words of Goualeuse had touched him.

Rodolph said to her, "My child, I wish to have some conversation with Madame Georges. My friend Murphy will lead you over the farm, and introduce you to your future *protégés*. We will join you presently. Well, Murphy, Murphy, don't you hear me?"

The worthy gentleman turned his back, and pretended to blow his nose with a very loud noise, then put his handkerchief in his pocket, pulled his hat over his eyes, and, turning half round, offered his arm to Marie, managing so skilfully, that neither Rodolph nor Madame Georges could see his face. Taking the arm of Marie, he walked away with her towards the farm-buildings, and so quickly, that, to keep up with him, Goualeuse was obliged to run, as in her infant days she ran beside the Chouette.

"Well, Madame Georges, what do you think of Marie?" inquired Rodolph.

"M. Rodolph, I have told you: she had scarcely entered my room, when, seeing the crucifix, she fell on her knees before it. It is impossible for me to tell you, to describe the spontaneous and naturally religious feeling that evidently dictated this. I saw in an instant that hers was no degraded soul. And then, M. Rodolph, the expression of her gratitude to you had nothing exaggerated in it; but it is not the less sincere. And I have another proof of how natural and potent is this religious instinct in her. I said to her, 'You must have been much astonished, and very happy, when M. Rodolph told you that you were to remain here for the future? What an effect it must have had on you!' 'Yes, oh! yes,' was her reply; 'when M. Rodolph told me so, I cannot describe what passed within me; but I felt that kind of holy happiness which I experience in going into a church. When I could go there,' she added, 'for you know, Madame——' 'I know, my child, for I shall always call you my child (I could not let her go on when I saw her cover her face for shame), I know that you have suffered deeply; but God blesses those who love and fear Him, those who have been unhappy, and those who repent.'"

"Then, my good Madame Georges, I am doubly happy at what I have done. This poor girl will greatly interest you, her disposition is so excellent, her instincts so right."

"What has besides affected me, M. Rodolph, is that she has not allowed one single question to escape her about you, although her curiosity must be so much excited. Struck with a reserve so full of delicacy, I wished to know what she felt. I said to her, 'You must be very curious to know who your mysterious benefactor is?' '*Know him!*' she replied, with delightful simplicity: '*he is my benefactor.*'"

"Then you will love her. Excellent woman! she will find some interest in your heart."

"Yes, I shall occupy my heart with her as I should with *him*," said Madame Georges, in a broken voice.

Rodolph took her hand.

"Do not be discouraged; come, come, if our search has been unsuccessful so far, yet one day, perhaps ——"

Madame Georges shook her head sorrowfully, and said, in bitter accents, "My poor son would be now twenty years old!"

"Say he *is* that age ——"

"God hear you, and grant it, M. Rodolph."

"He will hear, I fully believe. Yesterday I went (but in vain) to find a certain fellow called *Bras Rouge*, who might, perhaps, have given me some information about your son. Coming away from this Bras

Rouge's abode, after a struggle in which I was engaged, I met with this unfortunate girl ——"

"Alas! but your kind endeavour in my behalf has thrown in your way another unfortunate being, M. Rodolph."

"You have no intelligence from Rochfort?"

"None," said Madame Georges, shuddering, and in a low voice.

"So much the better! We can no longer doubt but that the monster met his death in the attempt to escape from the ——"

Rodolph hesitated to pronounce the horrible word.

"From the *Bagne?* Oh, say it! — the *Bagne!*" exclaimed the wretched woman with horror, and almost frantic as she spoke. "The father of my child! Ah! if the unhappy boy still lives — if, like me, he has not changed his name — oh, shame! shame! And yet it may be nothing: his father has, perhaps, carried out his horrid threat! What has he done with my boy? Why did he tear him from me?"

"That mystery I cannot fathom," said Rodolph, with a pensive air. "What could induce the wretch to carry off your son fifteen years ago, and when he was trying to escape into a foreign land? A child of that age could only embarrass his flight."

"Alas, M. Rodolph! when my *husband*" (the poor woman shuddered as she pronounced the word) "was arrested on the frontier and thrown into prison, where I was allowed to visit him, he said to me these horrible words: 'I took away the brat because you were fond of him, and it will be a means of compelling you to send me money, which may or may not be of service to him — that 's my affair. Whether he lives or dies it is no matter to you; but if he lives, he will be in good hands: you shall drink as deep of the shame of the son as you have of the disgrace of the father!' Alas! a month afterwards my husband was condemned to the galleys for life; and since then all my entreaties, my prayers and letters, have been in vain. I have never been able to learn the fate of my boy. Ah, M. Rodolph! where is my child at this moment? These frightful words are always ringing in my ears, 'You shall drink as deep of the shame of the son as you have of the disgrace of the father!'"

"This atrocity is most inexplicable: why should he demoralise the unhappy child? why carry him off?"

"I have told you, M. Rodolph—to compel me to send him money: although he had nearly ruined me, yet I had still some small resources, but they at length were exhausted also. In spite of his wickedness, I could not believe but that he would employ, at least, a portion of this money in the bringing-up of this unhappy child."

"And your son had no sign, no mark, by which he could be recognised?"

"No other than that of which I have spoken to you, M. Rodolph—a small *Saint-Esprit*, sculptured in lapis lazuli, tied round his neck by a chain of silver: a sacred relic, blessed by the holy father."

"Courage, courage; God is all-powerful."

"Providence placed me in your path, M. Rodolph."

"Too late, Madame Georges; too late. I might have saved you many years of sorrow."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, how kind you have been to me!"

"In what way? I bought this farm; in time of your prosperity you were not idle, and now you have become my manager here, where—thanks to your excellent superintendence, intelligence, and activity—this establishment produces me——"

"Produces you, my lord?" said Madame Georges, interrupting Rodolph; "why, all the returns are employed, not only in ameliorating the condition of the labourers, who consider the occupation on this model farm as a great favour, but, moreover, to succour all the needy in the district; through the mediation of our good abbé Laporte——"

"Ah, the dear abbé!" said Rodolph, desirous of escaping the praise of Madame Georges; "have you had the kindness to inform him of my arrival? I wish to recommend my *protégée* to him. He has had my letter?"

"Mr. Murphy gave it to him when he came this morning."

"In that letter I told our good curé, in a few words, the history of this poor girl. I was not sure that I should be able to come to-day myself, and if not, then Murphy would have conducted Marie——"

A labourer of the farm interrupted this conversation, which had been carried on in the garden.

"Madame, M. le Curé is waiting for you."

"Are the post-horses arrived, my lad?" inquired Rodolph.

"Yes, M. Rodolph; and they are putting to." And the man left the garden.

Madame Georges, the curé, and the inhabitants of the farm, only knew Fleur-de-Marie's protector as M. Rodolph. Murphy's discretion was faultless; and although when in private he was very precise in '*my-lording*' Rodolph, yet before strangers he was very careful not to address him otherwise than as *Monsieur Rodolph*.

"I forgot to mention, my dear Madame Georges," said Rodolph, when he returned to the house, "that Marie has, I fear, very weak lungs—privations and misery have tried her health. This morning early I was struck with the pallor of her countenance, although her cheeks were of a deep rose colour; her eyes, too, seem to me to have a brilliancy which betokens a feverish system. Great care must be taken of her."

"Rely on me, M. Rodolph; but, thank God! there is nothing serious to apprehend. At her age, in the country, with pure air, rest, and quiet, she will soon be quite restored."

"I hope so; but I will not trust to your country doctors. I will desire Murphy to bring here my medical man—a negro—a very skilful person, who will tell you the best regimen to pursue. You must send me news of Marie very often. Some time hence, when she shall be better, and more at ease, we will talk about her future life; perhaps it would be best that she always remained with you, if you were pleased with her."

"I should like it greatly, M. Rodolph; she would supply the place of the child I have lost, and must for ever bewail."

"Let us still hope for you and for her."

At the moment when Rodolph and Madame Georges approached the farm, Murphy and Marie also entered. The worthy gentleman let go the arm of Goualeuse, and said to Rodolph in a low voice, and with an air of some confusion,—

"This girl has bewitched me; I really do not know which interests me most, she or Madame Georges. I was a brute—a beast!"

"I knew, old Murphy, that you would do justice to my *protégée*," said Rodolph, smiling, and shaking hands with the squire.

Madame Georges, leaning on Marie's arm, entered with her into a small room on the ground-floor, where the Abbé Laporte was waiting. Murphy went away, to see all ready for their departure. Madame Georges, Marie, Rodolph, and the Curé, remained together.

Plain, but very comfortable, this small apartment was fitted up with green hangings, like the rest of the house, as had been exactly described to Goualeuse by Rodolph. A thick carpet covered the floor, a good fire burnt in the grate, and two large nosegays of daisies of all colours, placed in two crystal vases, shed their agreeable odour throughout the room. Through the windows, with their green blinds, which was half opened, was to be seen the meadow, the little stream, and, beyond it, the bank planted with chestnut-trees.

The Abbé Laporte, who was seated near the fire-place, was upwards of eighty years of age, and had, ever since the last days of the Revolution, done duty in this small parish. Nothing can be imagined more venerable than his aged, withered, and somewhat melancholy countenance, shaded by long white locks, which fell on the collar of his black cassock, which was pieced in more places than one: the abbé liked better, as they said, to clothe one or two poor children in good warm broad-cloth, than *faire le muguet;* that is, to wear his cassocks less than two or three years. The good abbé was so old, so very old, that his hands trembled continually, and when he occasionally lifted them up, when speaking, it might have been supposed that he was giving a benediction.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Rodolph, respectfully, "Madame Georges has undertaken the guardianship of this young girl, for whom I also beg your kindness."

"She is entitled to it, sir, like all who come to us. The mercy of God is inexhaustible, my dear child, and He has evinced it in not abandoning you in most severe trials.—I know all." And he took the hand of Marie in his own withered and trembling palms. "The generous man who has

saved you has realised the words of Holy Writ, 'The Lord is near to all those who call upon Him: He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him: He will hear their cries, and He will save them.' Now deserve his bounty by your conduct, and you will always find one ready to encourage and sustain you in the good path on which you have entered. You will have in Madame Georges a constant example, in me a careful adviser. The Lord will finish His work."

"And I will pray to Him for those who have had compassion on me and have led me to Him, father," said La Goualeuse, throwing herself on her knees before the priest. Her emotion overcame her: her sobs almost choked her. Madame Georges, Rodolph, and the abbé, were all deeply affected.

"Rise, my dear child," said the curé; "you will soon deserve absolution from those serious faults of which you have rather been the victim than the criminal: for, in the words of the prophet, 'The Lord raises up all those who are ready to fall, and elevates those who are oppressed.'"

Murphy, at this moment, opened the door.

"Monsieur Rodolph," he said, "the horses are ready."

"Adieu, father! adieu, Madame Georges! I commend your child to your care—our child, I should say. Farewell, Marie; I will soon come and see you again."

The venerable pastor, leaning on the arms of Madame Georges and La Goualeuse, who supported his tottering steps, left the room to see Rodolph depart.

The last rays of the sun shed their light on this interesting yet sad group:—

An old priest, the symbol of charity, pardon, and everlasting hope;

A female, overwhelmed by every grief that can distress a wife and mother;

A young girl, hardly out of her infancy, and but recently thrown into an abyss of vice through misery and the close contact with crime.

Rodolph got into the carriage, Murphy took his place by his side, and the horses set off at speed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

The day after he had confided the Goualeuse to the care of Madame Georges, Rodolph, still dressed as a mechanic, was, at noon precisely, at the door of a cabaret with the sign of the Panier-Fleuri, not far from the barrier of Bercy.

The evening before, at ten o'clock, the Chourineur was punctual to the appointment which Rodolph had fixed with him. The result of this narrative will inform our readers of the particulars of the meeting. It was twelve o'clock, and the rain fell in torrents; the Seine, swollen by perpetual falls of rain, had risen very high, and overflowed a part of the quay. Rodolph looked from time to time, with a gesture of impatience, towards the barrier, and at last observed a man and woman, who were coming towards him under the shelter of an umbrella, and whom he recognised as the Chouette and the Schoolmaster.

These two individuals were completely metamorphosed: the ruffian had laid aside his ragged garments and his air of brutal ferocity. He wore a long frock-coat of green cloth, and a round hat; whilst his shirt and cravat were remarkable for their whiteness. But for the hideousness of his features and the fierce glance of his eyes, always restless and suspicious, this fellow might have been taken, by his quiet and steady step, for an honest citizen.

The Chouette was also in her Sunday costume, wearing a large shawl of fine wool, with a large pattern, and held in her hand a capacious basket.

The rain having ceased for the moment, Rodolph, overcoming a sensation of disgust, went to meet the frightful pair. For the slang of the *tapis-franc* the Schoolmaster now substituted a style almost polished, and which betokened a cultivated mind, in strange contrast with his real character and crimes. When Rodolph approached, the brigand made him a polite bow, and the Chouette curtsied respectfully.

"Sir, your humble servant," said the Schoolmaster. "I am delighted to pay my respects to you—delighted—or, rather, to renew our acquaintance; for the night before last you paid me two blows of the fist which were enough to have felled a rhinoceros. But not a word of that now; it was a joke on your part, I am sure—merely done in jest. Let us not say another word about it, for serious business brings us now together. I saw the Chourineur yesterday, about eleven o'clock, at the *tapis-franc*, and appointed to meet him here to-day, in case he chose to

join us—to be our fellow-labourer; but it seems that he most decidedly refuses."

"You, then, accept the proposal?"

"Your name, sir, if you will be so good?"

"Rodolph."

"M. Rodolph, we will go into the Panier-Fleuri—neither myself nor Madame has breakfasted—and we will talk over our little matters whilst we are taking a crust."

"Most willingly."

"We can talk as we go on. You and the Chourineur certainly do owe some satisfaction to my wife and myself—you have caused us to lose more than two thousand francs. Chouette had a meeting near Saint-Ouen with the tall gentleman in mourning, who came to ask for you at the *tapis-franc*. He offered us two thousand francs to do something to you. The Chourineur has told me all about this. But, Finette," said the fellow, "go and select a room at the Panier-Fleuri, and order breakfast—some cutlets, a piece of veal, a salad, and a couple of bottles of vin de beaune—the best quality, and we will join you there."

The Chouette, who had not taken her eye off Rodolph for a moment, went off after exchanging looks with the Schoolmaster, who then said:

"I say, M. Rodolph, that the Chourineur has edified me on the subject of the two thousand francs."

"What do you mean by *edified* you?"

"You are right—the language is a little too refined for you. I would say, that the Chourineur nearly told me all that the tall gentleman in mourning, with his two thousand francs, required."

"Good."

"Not so good, young man; for the Chourineur, having yesterday morning met the Chouette, near Saint-Ouen, did not leave her for one moment, when the tall gentleman in mourning came up, so that he could not approach and converse with her. You, then, ought to put us in the way of regaining our two thousand francs."

"Nothing easier: but let us 'hark back.' I had proposed a glorious job to the Chourineur, which he at first accepted, but afterwards refused to go on with."

"He always has very peculiar ideas."

"But whilst he refused he observed to me ——"

"He made you observe ——"

"Oh, *diable!* you are very grand with your grammar."

"It is my profession, as a schoolmaster."

"He made me, then, observe, that if he would not go on this 'lay,' he did not desire to discourage any other person, and that you would willingly lend a hand in the affair."

"May I, without impertinence, ask why you appointed a meeting with the Chourineur at Saint-Ouen yesterday, which gave him the advantage of meeting the Chouette? He was too much puzzled at my question to give me a clear answer."

Rodolph bit his lips imperceptibly, and replied, shrugging his shoulders,

"Very likely; for I only told him half my plan, you must know, not knowing if he had made up his mind."

"That was very proper."

"The more so as I had two strings to my bow."

"You are a careful man. You met the Chourineur, then, at Saint-Ouen, for ——"

Rodolph, after a moment's hesitation, had the good luck to think of a story which would account for the want of address which the Chourineur had displayed, and said:

"Why, this it is. The attempt I propose is a famous one, because the person in question is in the country: all my fear was that he should return to Paris. To make sure, I went to Pierrefitte, where his country-house is situated, and there I learned that he would not be back again until the day after to-morrow."

"Well, but to return to my question: why did you appoint to meet the Chourineur at Saint-Ouen?"

"Why, you are not so bright as I took you for. How far is it from Pierrefitte to Saint-Ouen?"

"About a league."

"And from Saint-Ouen to Paris?"

"As much."

"Well, if I had not found any one at Pierrefitte—that is, if there had been an empty house there—why, there also would have been a good job: not so good as in Paris, but still well worth having. I went back to the Chourineur, who was waiting for me at Saint-Ouen. We should have returned then to Pierrefitte, by a cross-path which I know, and ——"

"I understand. If, on the contrary, the job was to be done in Paris?"

"We should have gained the barrier de l'Étoile by the road of the Rivolte, and thence to the Allée des Veuves ——"

"Is but a step: this is plain enough. At Saint-Ouen you were well placed for either operation—that was clear; and now I can understand why the Chourineur was at Saint-Ouen. So the house in the Allée des Veuves will be uninhabited until the day after to-morrow?"

"Uninhabited, except the porter."

"I see. And is it a profitable job?"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold in the proprietor's cabinet."

"And you know all the ways?"

"Perfectly."

"Silence—here we are—not a word before the vulgar. I do not know if you feel as I do, but the morning air has given me an appetite."

The Chouette was awaiting them at the door.

"This way—this way," she said. "I have ordered our breakfast."

Rodolph wished the brigand to pass in first, for certain reasons; but the Schoolmaster insisted on shewing so much politeness, that Rodolph entered before him. Before he sat down, the Schoolmaster tapped lightly against each of the divisions of the wainscot, that he might ascertain their thickness and power of transmitting sounds.

"We need not be afraid to speak out," said he; "the division is not thin. We shall have our breakfast soon, and shall not be disturbed in our conversation."

A waiter brought in the breakfast, and before he shut the door Rodolph saw the charcoal-man, Murphy, seated with great composure at a table in a room close at hand.

The room in which the scene took place that we are describing was long and narrow, lighted by one window, which looked into the street, and was opposite to the door. The Chouette turned her back to this window, whilst the Schoolmaster was at one side of the table, and Rodolph on the other.

When the servant left the room, the brigand got up, took his plate, and seated himself beside Rodolph and between him and the door.

"We can talk better," he said, "and need not talk so loud."

"And then you can prevent me from going out," replied Rodolph, calmly.

The Schoolmaster gave a nod in the affirmative, and then, half drawing out of the pocket of his frock-coat a stiletto, round and as thick as a goose's quill, with a handle of wood which disappeared in the grasp of his hairy fingers, said,

"You see that?"

"I do."

"Advice to amateurs!" And bringing his shaggy brows together, by a frown which made his wide and flat forehead closely resemble a tiger's, he made a significant gesture.

"And you may believe me," added the Chouette, "I have made the *tool* sharp."

Rodolph, with perfect coolness, put his hand under his blouse, and took out a double-barrelled pistol, which he shewed to the Schoolmaster, and then put into his pocket.

"All right; and now we understand each other: but do not misunderstand me—I am only alluding to an impossibility. If they try to arrest me, and you have laid any trap for me, I will make '*cold meat*' of you."

And he gave a fierce look at Rodolph.

"And I will spring upon him and help you, *fourline*," cried the Chouette.

Rodolph made no reply, but shrugged his shoulders, and, pouring out a glass of wine, tossed it off. His coolness deceived the Schoolmaster.

"I only put you on your guard."

"Well, then, put up your 'larding-pin' into your pocket: you have no chicken to lard now. I am an old cock, and know my game as well as most," said Rodolph. "But, to our business."

"Yes, let us talk of business: but do not speak against my 'larding-pin;' it makes no noise, and does not disturb any body."

"And does its work as should be: doesn't it, *fourline?*" added the old beldam.

"By the way," said Rodolph to the Chouette, "do you really know the Goualeuse's parents?"

"My man has in his pocket two letters about it, but she shall never see them—the little slut! I would rather tear her eyes out with my own hands. Oh! when I meet her again at the *tapis-franc*, won't I pay her off——"

"There, that'll do, Finette; we have other things to talk of, and so leave off your gossip."

"May we 'patter' before the 'mot?'" asked Rodolph.

"Most decidedly! She's true as steel, and is worth her weight in gold to watch for us—to get information or impressions of keys, to conceal stolen goods or sell them,—nothing comes amiss to her. She is a first-rate manager. Good Finette!" added the robber, extending his hand to the horrid hag. "You can have no idea of the services she has done me. Take off your shawl, Finette, or you 'll be cold when you go out: put it on the chair with your basket."

The Chouette took off her shawl.

In spite of his presence of mind, and the command which he had over himself, Rodolph could not quite conceal his surprise when he saw suspended by a ring of silver, from a thick chain of metal which hung round the old creature's neck, a small *Saint-Esprit* in lapis lazuli, precisely resembling that which the son of Madame Georges had round his neck when he was carried off.

At this discovery, a sudden idea flashed across the mind of Rodolph. According to the Chourineur's statement, the Schoolmaster had escaped from the Bagne six months ago, and had since defied all search after him by disfiguring himself as he had now; and six months ago the husband of Madame Georges had disappeared from the Bagne. Rodolph surmised that, very possibly, the Schoolmaster was the husband of that unhappy lady. If this were so, he knew the fate of the son she lamented—he possessed, too, some papers relative to the birth of the Goualeuse. Rodolph had, then, fresh motives for persevering in his projects, and,

fortunately, his absence of mind was not observed by the Schoolmaster, who was busy helping the Chouette.

"*Morbleu!* what a pretty chain you have!" said Rodolph to the one-eyed woman.

"Pretty, and not dear," answered the old creature, laughing. "It is only a sham till my man can afford to give me a real one."

"That will depend on this gentleman, Finette. If our job comes off well, why then ——"

"It is astonishing how well it is imitated," continued Rodolph "And what is that little blue thing at the end?"

"It is a present from my man, which I shall wear until he gives me a *ticker*. Is n't it, *fourline?*"

Rodolph's suspicions were thus half confirmed, and he waited with anxiety for the reply of the Schoolmaster, who said:

"You must take care of that, notwithstanding the ticker, Finette: it is a talisman, and brings good luck."

"A talisman!" said Rodolph, in a careless tone: "do you believe in talismans? And where the devil did you pick it up? Give me the address of the shop."

"They do not make them now—the shop is shut up. As you see it, that bit of jewellery has a very great antiquity—three generations. I value it highly, for it is a family loom," added he, with a hideous grin; "and that 's why I gave it to Finette, that she might have good fortune in the enterprises in which she so skilfully seconds me. Only see her at work!—only see her! If we go into *business* together, why—— But let us now to our affair in hand. You say, that in the Allée des Veuves——"

"At No. 17 there is a house inhabited by a rich man, whose name is ——"

"I will not be guilty of the indiscretion of asking his name. You say there are sixty thousand francs in gold in a cabinet?"

"Sixty thousand francs in gold!" exclaimed the Chouette.

Rodolph nodded his head in the affirmative.

"And you know this house, and the people in it?" said the Schoolmaster.

"Quite well."

"Is the entry difficult?"

"A wall seven feet high on the side of the Allée des Veuves, a garden, windows down to the ground, and the house has only the ground-floor throughout."

"And there is only the porter to guard this treasure?"

"Yes."

"And what, young man, is your proposed plan of proceeding?"

"Simple enough: to climb over the wall, pick the lock of the door, or force open a shutter or lock. What do you think of it?"

"I cannot answer you before I have examined it all myself—that is, by the aid of my wife: but, if all you tell me is as you say, I think it would be the thing to do it at once this evening."

And the ruffian looked earnestly at Rodolph.

"This evening!—impossible!" replied he.

"Why, since the occupier does not return until the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I—I cannot this evening ——"

"Really? Well, and I—I cannot to-morrow."

"Why not?"

"For the reason that prevents you this evening," said the robber, in a tone of mockery.

After a moment's reflection, Rodolph replied:

"Well, then, this evening be it. Where shall we meet?"

"We will not separate," said the Schoolmaster.

"Why not?"

"Why should we?"

"What is the use of separating? The weather has cleared up, and we will go and walk about, and give a look at the Allée des Veuves: you will see how my woman will work. When that is done, we will return and play a hand at piquet, and have a bit of something in a place in the Champs Elysées that I know, near the river; and, as the Allée des Veuves is deserted at an early hour, we will walk that way about ten o'clock."

"I will join you at nine o'clock."

"Do you or do you not wish that we should do this job together?"

"I do wish it."

"Well, then, we do not separate before evening, or else ——"

"Or else?"

"I shall think that you are making '*a plant*' for me, and that 's the reason you wish to part company now."

"If I wished to set the '*traps*' after you, what is to prevent my doing so this evening?"

"Why, every thing. You did not expect that I should propose the affair to you so soon, and if you do not leave us you cannot put any body up to it."

"You mistrust me, then?"

"Most extremely. But as what you propose may be quite true and honest, and the half of sixty thousand francs is worth a risk, I am willing to try for it; but this evening, or never: if *never*, I shall have my suspicions of you confirmed, and one day or other I will take care and let you dine off a dish of my cooking."

"And I will return your compliment, rely on it."

"Oh, this is all stuff and nonsense!" said the Chouette. "I think with *fourline*, to-night or never."

Rodolph was in a state of extreme anxiety; if he allowed this opportunity to escape of laying hands on the Schoolmaster, he might never again light on him. The ruffian would ever afterwards be on his guard, or if recognised, apprehended, and taken back to the Bagne, would carry with him that secret which Rodolph had so much interest in discovering. Confiding in his address and courage, and trusting to chance, he said to the Schoolmaster,

"Agreed, then; and we will not part company before evening."

"Then I'm your man. It is now two o'clock—it is some distance from here to the Allée des Veuves—it is raining again in torrents—let us pay the reckoning and take a coach."

"If we have a coach, I should like first to smoke a cigar."

"Why not?" said the Schoolmaster. "Finette does not mind the smell of tobacco."

"Well, then, I 'll go and fetch some cigars," said Rodolph, rising.

"Pray don't give yourself that trouble," said the Schoolmaster, stopping him: "Finette will go."

Rodolph resumed his seat. The Schoolmaster had penetrated his design. The Chouette went out.

"What a clever manager I have, haven't I?" said the ruffian; "and so tractable, she would throw herself into the fire for me."

"*Apropos* of fire, it is not over-warm here," replied Rodolph, placing both his hands under his blouse; and then, continuing his conversation with the Schoolmaster, he took out a lead pencil and a morsel of paper, which he had in his waistcoat-pocket, without being detected, and wrote some words hastily, taking care to make his letters wide apart, so that they might be more legible: for he wrote under his blouse, and without seeing what he wrote.

This note escaped the penetration of the Schoolmaster: the next thing was to enable it to reach its address.

Rodolph rose and went listlessly towards the window, and began to hum a tune between his teeth, accompanying himself on the window glasses.

The Schoolmaster came up to the window and said to Rodolph,

"What tune are you playing?"

"I am playing '*Tu n'auras pas ma rose.*'"

"And a very pretty tune it is. I should like to know if it would have the effect of making any of the passers-by turn round?"

"I had no such intention."

"You are wrong, young man; for you are playing the tambourine on

that pane of glass with all your might. But I was thinking, the porter of this house in the Allée des Veuves is perhaps a stout fellow; if he

resists, you have only your pistol, which is a noisy weapon, whilst a tool like this (and he shewed Rodolph the handle of his poniard) makes no noise, and does not disturb any body."

"Do you mean, then, to assassinate him?" exclaimed Rodolph. "If you have any such intention, let us give up the job altogether: I will have no hand in it—so don't rely on me——"

"But if he awakes?"

"We will take to our heels."

"Well, just as you like; only it is better to come to a clear understanding beforehand. So, then, ours is simply a mere robbery with forcible entry——"

"Nothing more."

"That 's very silly and contemptible: but so be it."

"And as I will not leave you for a second," thought Rodolph, "I will prevent you from shedding blood."

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATIONS.

The Chouette returned to the room, bringing the cigars with her.

"I don't think it rains now," said Rodolph, lighting his cigar. "Suppose we go and fetch the coach ourselves—it will stretch our legs."

"What! not rain!" replied the Schoolmaster: "are you blind? Do you think I will expose Finette to the chance of catching cold, and exposing her precious life, and spoiling her new shawl?"

"You are right, old fellow: it rains cats and dogs. Let the servant come and we can pay him, and desire him to fetch us a coach," replied Rodolph.

"That 's the most sensible thing you have said yet, young fellow; we may go and look about as we seek the Allée des Veuves."

The servant entered, and Rodolph gave her five francs.

"Ah! sir, it is really an imposition—I cannot allow it," exclaimed the Schoolmaster.

"Oh! all right: your turn next time."

"Be it so, but on condition that I shall offer you something, by and by, in a little cabaret in the Champs Elysées—a capital little snuggery that I know of."

"Just as you like."

The servant paid, and they left the room.

Rodolph wished to go last, out of politeness to the Chouette, but the Schoolmaster would not allow it, and followed close on his heels, watching his every movement.

The master of the house kept a wine-shop also, and amongst other drinkers a charcoal-man, with his face blackened and his large hat flapping over his eyes, was paying his 'shot' at the bar when these three personages appeared. In spite of the close look-out of the Schoolmaster and the one-eyed hag, Rodolph, who walked before the hideous pair, exchanged a rapid and unperceived glance with Murphy as he got into the hackney-coach.

"Which way am I to go, master?" asked the driver.

Rodolph replied, in a loud voice,

"Allée des ——"

"Des Acacias, in the Bois de Boulogne," cried the Schoolmaster, interrupting him. Then he added, "And we will pay you well, coachman."

The door was shut.

"What the devil made you bawl out which way we were going before these people?" said the Schoolmaster. "If the thing were found out to-morrow, we might be traced and discovered. Young man—young man, you are very imprudent!"

The coach was already in motion. Rodolph answered,

"True; I did not think of that. But with my cigar I shall smoke you like herrings: let us have a window open."

And, joining the action to the word, Rodolph, with much dexterity, let fall outside the window the morsel of paper, folded very small, on which he had hastily written a few words in pencil under his blouse. The Schoolmaster's glance was so quick, that, in spite of the calmness of Rodolph's features, the ruffian detected some expression of triumph, for, putting his head out of window, he called out to the driver,

"Whip behind! whip behind! there is some one getting up at the back of the coach!"

The coach stopped, and the driver, standing on his seat, looked back, and said,

"No, master, there is no one there."

"*Parbleu!* I will look myself," replied the Schoolmaster, jumping out into the street.

Not seeing any person or any thing (for since Rodolph had dropped the paper the coach had gone on several yards), the Schoolmaster thought he was mistaken.

"You will laugh at me," he said, as he resumed his seat, "but I don't know why I thought some one was following us."

The coach at this moment turned round a corner, and Murphy, who had not lost sight of it with his eyes, and had seen Rodolph's manœuvre,

ran and picked up the little note, which had fallen into a crevice between two of the paving-stones.

At the end of a quarter of an hour the Schoolmaster said to the driver of the hackney-coach,

"My man, we have changed our minds: drive to the Place de la Madelaine."

Rodolph looked at him with astonishment.

"All right, young man: from hence we may go to a thousand different places. If they seek to track us hereafter, the deposition of the coachman will not be of the slightest service to them."

At the moment when the coach was approaching the barrier, a tall man, clothed in a long white riding-coat, with his hat drawn over his eyes, and whose complexion appeared of a deep brown, passed rapidly along the road, stooping over the neck of a high, splendid hunter, which trotted with extraordinary speed.

"A good horse and a good rider," said Rodolph, leaning forward to the door of the coach and following Murphy (for it was he) with his eyes. "What a pace that stout man goes! Did you see him?"

"*Ma foi!* he passed so very quickly," said the Schoolmaster, "that I did not remark him."

Rodolph calmly concealed his satisfaction; Murphy had, doubtless, deciphered the almost hieroglyphic characters of the note which he had dropped, and which had escaped the vigilance of the Schoolmaster. Certain that the coach was not followed, he had become more assured, and desirous of imitating the Chouette, who slept, or rather pretended to sleep, he said to Rodolph,

"Excuse me, young man, but the motion of the coach always produces a singular effect on me—it sends me off to sleep like a child."

The ruffian, under the guise of assumed sleep, thought to examine whether the physiognomy of his companion betrayed any emotion; but Rodolph was on his guard, and replied,

"I rose so early that I feel sleepy, and will have a nap too."

He shut his eyes, and very soon the hard breathing of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette, who snored in chorus, so completely deceived Rodolph, that, thinking his companions sound asleep, he half opened his eyes. The Schoolmaster and the Chouette, in spite of their loud snoring, had their eyes open, and were exchanging some mysterious signs by means of their fingers curiously placed or bent in the palms of their hands. In an instant this mute language ceased. The brigand no doubt perceived, by some almost imperceptible sign, that Rodolph was not asleep, and said, in a laughing tone,

"Ah, ah, comrade! what, you were trying your friends, were you?"

"That can't astonish you, who sleep with your eyes open."

"I, who —— That's different, young man: I am a somnambulist."

The hackney-coach stopped in the Place de la Madelaine. The rain had ceased for a moment, but the clouds, driven by the violence of the wind, were so dark and so low, that it was almost night in appearance. Rodolph, the Chouette, and the Schoolmaster, went towards the Cours la Reine.

"Young man, I have an idea, which is not a bad one," said the robber.

"What is it?"

"To ascertain if all that you have told us respecting the interior of the house in the Allée des Veuves is true."

"You surely will not go there now, under any circumstances? It would awaken suspicion."

"I am not such a flat as that, young fellow: but why have I a wife whose name is Finette?"

The Chouette drew up her head.

"Do you see her, young man? Why, she looks like a war-horse when he hears the blast of the trumpet!"

"You mean to send her as a look-out?"

"Precisely so."

"No. 17, Allée des Veuves, isn't it, my man?" cried the Chouette, impatiently. "Make yourself easy: I have but one eye, but that is a good one."

"Do you see, young man—do you see she is all impatience to be at work?"

"If she manages cleverly to get into the house, I do not think your idea a bad one."

"Take the umbrella, *fourline;* in half-an-hour I will be here again, and you shall see what I will do," said the Chouette.

"One moment, Finette: we are going down to the '*Bleeding Heart*'—only two steps from here. If the little *Tortillard* (cripple) is there,

you had better take him with you: he will remain outside on the watch whilst you go inside the house."

"You are right—little Tortillard is as cunning as a fox: he is not ten years of age, and yet it was he who the other day ——"

A signal from the Schoolmaster interrupted the Chouette.

"What does the '*Bleeding Heart*' mean?—it is an odd sign for a cabaret," asked Rodolph.

"You must complain to the landlord."

"What is his name?"

"The landlord of the '*Bleeding Heart?*'"

"Yes."

"What is that to you? He never asks the names of his customers."

"But, still ——"

"Call him what you like—Peter, Thomas, Christopher, or Barnabas, he will answer to any and all. But here we are, and it's time we were, for the rain is coming down again in floods; and how the river roars!—it has almost become a torrent! Why, look at it! Two more days of such rain, and the water will overflow the arches of the bridge."

"You say that we are *there*, but where the devil is the cabaret? I do not see any house here."

"Certainly not, if you look round about you."

"Where should I look then?"

"At your feet."

"At my feet?"

"Yes."

"And whereabouts?"

"Here—look: do you see the roof? Mind, and don't step upon it."

Rodolph had not remarked one of those subterraneans which used to be seen, some years since, in certain spots in the Champs Elysées, and particularly near the Cours la Reine.

A flight of steps, cut out of the damp and greasy ground, led to the bottom of this sort of deep ditch, against one end of which, cut perpendicularly, leaned a low, mean, dilapidated hovel; its roof, covered with moss-covered tiles, was scarcely so high as the ground on which Rodolph was standing; two or three out-buildings, constructed of worm-eaten planks, serving as cellar, wood-house, and rabbit-hutches, surrounded this wretched den.

A narrow path, which extended along this ditch, led from the stairs to the door of the hut; the rest of the ground was concealed under a mass of trellis-work, which sheltered two rows of clumsy tables, fastened to the ground. A worn-out iron sign swung heavily backwards and forwards on its creaking hinges, and through the rust that covered it might still be seen *a red heart pierced with an arrow.* The sign was supported by a post erected above this cave—this real *human burrow.*

A thick and moist fog was added to the rain as night approached.

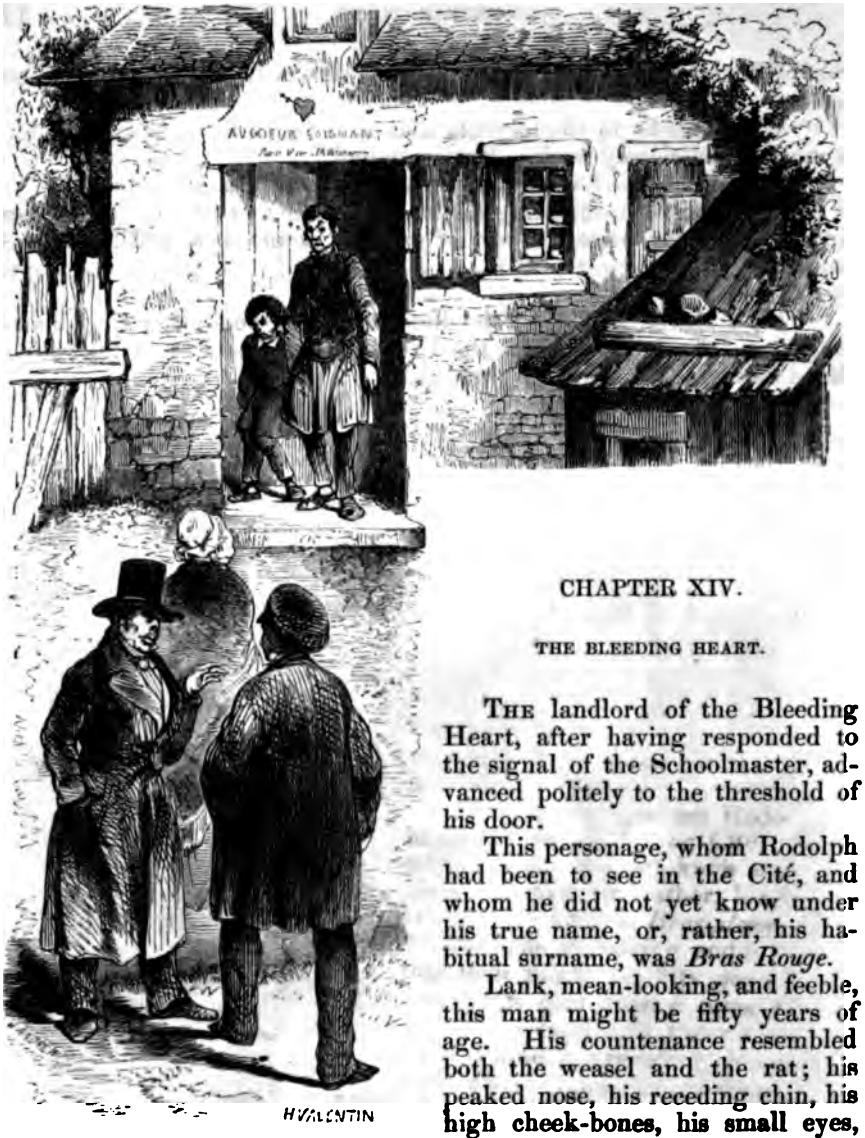
"What think you of this hôtel, young fellow?" inquired the Schoolmaster.

"Why, thanks to the torrents that have fallen for the last fortnight, it must be deliciously fresh. But come on."

"One moment—I wish to know if the landlord is in. Hark!"

The ruffian then, thrusting his tongue forcibly against his palate, produced a singular noise—a sort of guttural sound, loud and lengthened, something like P-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!!! A similar note came from the depths of the hovel.

"He 's there," said the Schoolmaster. "Pardon me, young man—respect to the ladies—allow the Chouette to pass first: I follow you. Mind how you come—it 's slippery."



CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLEEDING HEART.

The landlord of the Bleeding Heart, after having responded to the signal of the Schoolmaster, advanced politely to the threshold of his door.

This personage, whom Rodolph had been to see in the Cité, and whom he did not yet know under his true name, or, rather, his habitual surname, was *Bras Rouge*.

Lank, mean-looking, and feeble, this man might be fifty years of age. His countenance resembled both the weasel and the rat; his peaked nose, his receding chin, his high cheek-bones, his small eyes, black, restless, and keen, gave his features an indescribable expression of malice, cunning, and sagacity. An old brown wig, or, rather, as yellow as his bilious complexion, perched on the top of his head, shewed the nape of the old fellow's withered neck. He had on a round jacket, and one of those long black aprons worn by the waiters at the wine-shops.

Our three acquaintances had hardly descended the last step of the staircase when a child of about ten years of age, rickety, lame, and somewhat misshapen, came to rejoin Bras Rouge, whom he resembled in so striking a manner that there was no mistaking them for father and son. There was the same quick and cunning look, joined to that impudent, hardened, and knavish air, which is peculiar to the scamp (*voyou*) of

Paris—that fearful type of precocious depravity, that real *hempseed* (*graine de bagne*), as they style it, in the horrible slang of the gaol. The

Bras Rouge.

forehead of the brat was half lost beneath a thatch of yellowish locks, as harsh and stiff as horse-hair. Reddish-coloured trousers and a grey blouse, confined by a leather girdle, completed Tortillard's costume, whose nickname was derived from his infirmity. He stood close to his father, standing on his sound leg like a heron by the side of a marsh.

"Ah, here is the darling one! (*môme*)," said the Schoolmaster. "Finette, night is coming on, and time is pressing; we must profit by the daylight which is left to us."

"You are right, my man: I will ask the father to spare his darling."

"Good day, old friend," said Bras Rouge, addressing the Schoolmaster, in a voice which was cracked, sharp, and shrill. "What can I do for you?"

"Why, if you could spare your 'small boy' to my mistress for a quarter of an hour, she has lost something which he could help her to look for."

Bras Rouge winked his eye and made a sign to the Schoolmaster, and then said to the child,

"Tortillard, go with Madame."

The hideous brat hopped forward and took hold of the 'one-eyed's' hand.

"Love of a bright boy, come along! There is a child!" said Finette. "And how like his father! He is not like Pegriotte, who always pre-

Tortillard.

tended to have a pain in her side when she came near me—a little baggage!"

"Come, come, away!—be off, Finette! Keep your weather-eye open, and bright look-out. I await you here."

"I won't be long. Go first, Tortillard."

The one-eyed hag and the little cripple went up the slippery steps.

"Finette, take the umbrella," the brigand called out.

"It would be in the way, my man," said the old woman, who quickly disappeared with Tortillard in the midst of the fog, which thickened with the twilight, and the hollow murmur of the wind as it moaned through the thick and leafless branches of the tall elms in the Champs Elysées.

"Let us go in," said Rodolph.

It was requisite to stoop in passing in at the door of the cabaret, which was divided into two apartments. In one was a bar and a broken-down billiard-table; in the other, tables and garden-chairs, which had once been painted green. Two narrow windows, with their cracked panes festooned with spiders' webs, cast a dim but not religious light on the damp walls.

Rodolph was alone for one moment only, during which Bras Rouge and the Schoolmaster had time to exchange some words, rapidly uttered, and some mysterious signs.

"You 'll take a glass of beer—or brandy, perhaps—whilst we wait for Finette?" said the Schoolmaster.

"No: I am not thirsty."

"Do as you like—I am for a *drain* of brandy," said the ruffian; and he seated himself on one of the little green tables in the second apartment.

Darkness came on to this den so completely, that it was impossible to see in one of the angles of this inner apartment the open mouth of one of those cellars which are entered by a door in two divisions, one of which was constantly kept open for the convenience of access. The table at which the Schoolmaster sat was close upon this dark and deep hole, and he turned his back upon it, so that it was entirely concealed from Rodolph's view.

He was looking through the window, in order to command his countenance and conceal the workings of his thoughts. The sight of Murphy speeding through the Allée des Veuves did not quite assure him; he was afraid that the worthy squire had not quite understood the full meaning of his note, necessarily so laconic, and containing only these words:

"*This evening—ten o'clock. Be on your guard.*"

Resolved not to go to the Allée des Veuves before that moment, nor to lose sight of the Schoolmaster for an instant, he yet trembled at the idea of losing the only opportunity that might ever be afforded him of obtaining that secret which he was so excessively anxious to possess. Although he was powerful and well armed, yet he had to deal with an unscrupulous assassin, capable of any and every thing. Not desiring, however, that his thoughts should be detected, he seated himself at the table with the Schoolmaster, and, by way of seeming at his ease, called for a glass of something. Bras Rouge having exchanged a few words, in a low tone, with the brigand, looked at Rodolph with an air in which curiosity, distrust, and contempt, were mingled.

"It is my advice, young man," said the Schoolmaster, "that if my wife informs us that the persons we wish to see are within, we had better make our call about eight o'clock."

"That will be two hours too soon," said Rodolph; "and that will spoil all."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Bah! amongst friends there should be no ceremony."

"I know them well, and I tell you that we must not think of going before ten o'clock."

"Are you out of your senses, young man?"

"I give you my opinion, and devil fetch me if I stir from here before ten o'clock."

"Don't disturb yourself—I never close my establishment before midnight," said Bras Rouge, in his falsetto voice: "it is the time when my best customers drop in; and my neighbours never complain of the noise which is made in my house."

"I must agree to all you wish, young man," continued the Schoolmaster. "Be it so, then: we will not set out on our visit until ten o'clock."

"Here is the Chouette!" said Bras Rouge, hearing and replying to a warning cry similar to that which the Schoolmaster had uttered before he descended to the subterraneous abode.

A minute afterwards the Chouette entered the billiard-room alone.

"It is all right, my man—I 've done the trick!" cried the one-eyed hag as she entered.

Bras Rouge discreetly withdrew, without asking a word about Tortillard, whom, perhaps, he did not expect to see return. The beldam sat with her face towards Rodolph and the brigand.

"Well?" said the Schoolmaster.

"The young fellow has told us all true, so far."

"Ah! you see I was right," exclaimed Rodolph.

"Let the Chouette tell her tale, young man. Come, tell us all about it, Finette."

"I went straight to No. 17, leaving Tortillard on the look-out and concealed in a corner. It was still daylight, and I rung at a side-door

which opens outwards, and here's about two inches of space between it and the sill: nothing else to notice. I rang, the porter opened. Before I pulled the bell I had put my bonnet in my pocket, that I might look like a neighbour. As soon as I saw the porter I pretended to cry violently, saying that I had lost a pet parrot, Cocotte—a little darling that I adored. I told him I lived in the Rue Marbœuf, and that I had pursued Cocotte from garden to garden, and entreated him to allow me to enter and try and find the bird."

"Ah!" said the Schoolmaster, with an air of proud satisfaction, pointing to Finette, "what a woman!"

"Very clever," said Rodolph. "And what then?"

"The porter allowed me to look for the creature, and I went trotting all round the garden, calling 'Cocotte! Cocotte!' and looking about me in every direction to scrutinise every thing. Inside the walls," continued the horrid old hag, going on with her description of the premises, "inside the walls, trellis-work all round—a perfect staircase; at the left-hand corner of the wall a fir-tree, just like a ladder—a lying-in woman might descend by it. The house has six windows on the ground-floor, and has no upper story—six small windows, without any fastening. The windows of the ground-floor close with shutters, having hooks below and staples in the upper part: press in the bottom, use your steel file——"

"A push," said the Schoolmaster, "and it is open."

The Chouette continued:

"The entrance has a glass-door, two Venetian blinds outside——"

"Memorandum," said the ruffian.

"Quite correct: it is as precise as if we saw it," said Rodolph.

"On the left," resumed the Chouette, "near the court-yard, is a well: the rope may be useful (for at that particular spot there is no trellis against the wall), in case retreat should be cut off in the direction of the door. On entering into the house——"

"You got inside the house, then? Young man, she got inside the house!" said the Schoolmaster, with pride.

"To be sure I got in! Not finding Cocotte, I had made so much lamentation that I pretended I was quite out of breath: I begged the porter to allow me to sit down on the step of the door, and he very kindly asked me to step in, offering me a glass of wine and water. 'A glass of plain water,' I said; 'plain water only, my good sir.' Then he made me go into the antechamber—carpeted all over: good precaution—footsteps or broken glass cannot be heard, if we must 'mill the glaze' (break a pane of glass); right and left, doors with sliding bolts, which open by a gentle push from the top. At the bottom was a strong door, locked—it looked very like a money-chest. I had my wax in my basket——"

"She had her wax, young man! she never goes without her wax!" said the brigand.

The Chouette proceeded:

"It was necessary to approach the door which smelled so strongly of the cash, so I pretended that I was seized with a fit of coughing—so violent, that I was compelled to lean against the wall for support. Hearing me cough, the porter said, 'I'll fetch you a morsel of sugar to

put in your water.' He probably looked for a spoon, for I heard plate *chink*—plate in the room on the left-hand: don't forget that, *fourline*. Well, coughing and wheezing, I reached the door at the bottom—I had my wax in the palm of my hand. I leaned against the lock as though

accidentally, and here is the impression: we may not want it to-day, but another time it may be useful."

And the Chouette gave the brigand a bit of yellow wax, on which the print of the lock was perfectly impressed.

"You can tell us whether this is the door of the money-chest," said the Chouette.

"It is, and there is the cash," replied Rodolph; and then said to himself, "Has Murphy, then, been the dupe of this cursed old hag? Perhaps so, and he only expects to be assailed at ten o'clock: by that time every precaution will have been taken."

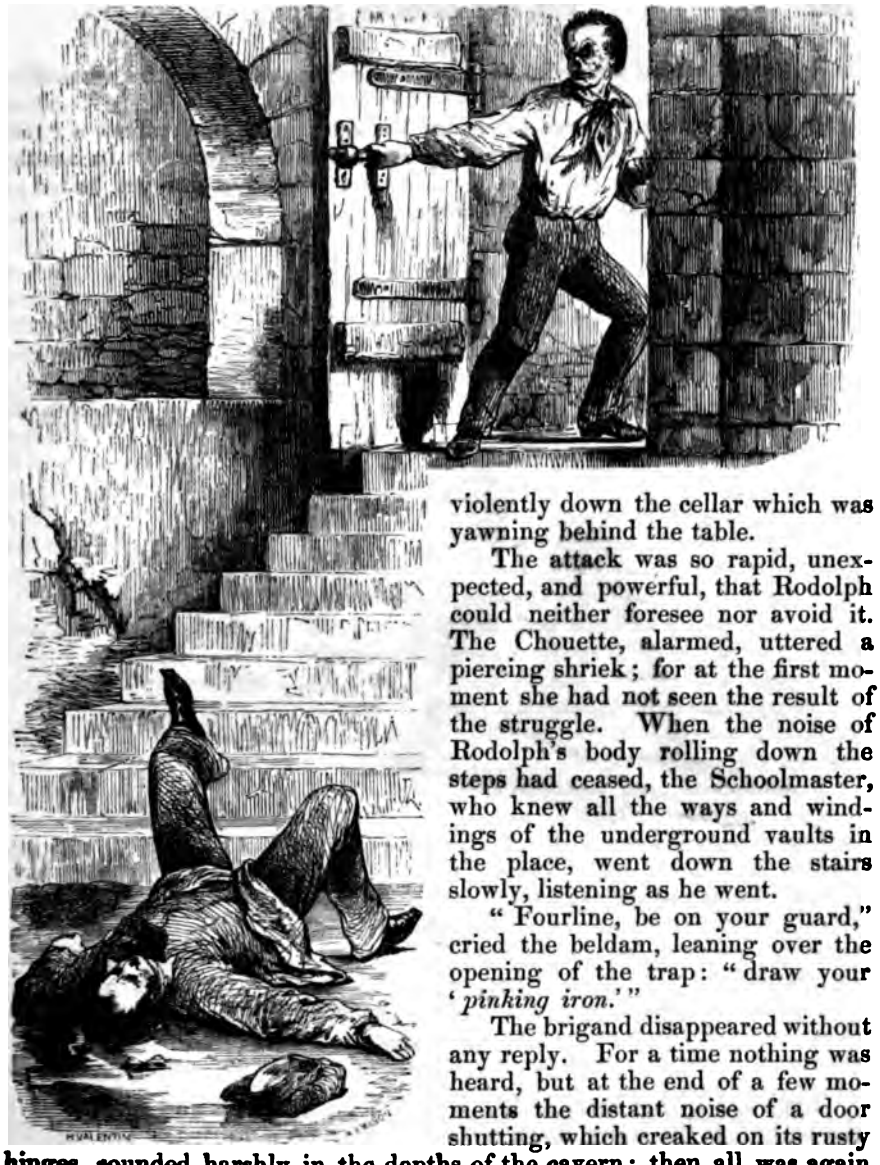
"But all the money is not there," continued the Chouette, and her one green eye sparkled. "As I approached the windows, still searching for my darling Cocotte, I saw in one of the chambers (door on the left) some bags of crown-pieces, in a bureau. I saw them as plainly as I see you, my man; there were at least a dozen of them."

"Where is Tortillard?" said the Schoolmaster.

"In his hiding-place—not more than two paces from the garden. He can see in the dark like a cat. There is only that one entrance to No. 17, so when we go he will tell us if any one has come or not."

"That 's good ——"

The Schoolmaster had scarcely uttered these words than he made a sudden rush at Rodolph, grappled him by the throat, and flung him



violently down the cellar which was yawning behind the table.

The attack was so rapid, unexpected, and powerful, that Rodolph could neither foresee nor avoid it. The Chouette, alarmed, uttered a piercing shriek; for at the first moment she had not seen the result of the struggle. When the noise of Rodolph's body rolling down the steps had ceased, the Schoolmaster, who knew all the ways and windings of the underground vaults in the place, went down the stairs slowly, listening as he went.

"Fourline, be on your guard," cried the beldam, leaning over the opening of the trap: "draw your '*pinking iron.*'"

The brigand disappeared without any reply. For a time nothing was heard, but at the end of a few moments the distant noise of a door shutting, which creaked on its rusty hinges, sounded harshly in the depths of the cavern: then all was again still as death. The darkness was complete. The Chouette fumbled in her basket, and then producing a lucifer-match lighted a wax taper, whose feeble ray made visible the darkness of this dreary den.

At this moment the monster-visage of the Schoolmaster appeared at the opening of the trap. The Chouette could not repress an exclamation of horror at the sight of his ghastly, seamed, mutilated, and fearful face, with eyes that gleamed like phosphorus, and seemed to glare on the ground even in the midst of the darkness which the lighted taper could not entirely dissipate. Having subdued her feeling of fright, the old hag exclaimed, in a tone of horrible flattery,

"You must be an awful man, *fourline*, for even I was frightened! — yes, I!!"

"Quick, quick, for the Allée des Veuves!" said the ruffian, securely closing the double flap of the trap with a bar of iron. "In another hour, perhaps, it will be too late. If it is a trap, it is not yet baited; if it is not, why we can do the job alone."

CHAPTER XV.

THE VAULT.

Stunned by his horrible fall, Rodolph lay senseless and motionless at the bottom of the stairs, down which he had been hurled. The Schoolmaster, dragging him to the entrance of a second and still deeper cavern, thrust him into its hideous recesses, and closing and securely bolting a massy iron-shod door, returned to his worthy confederate the Chouette, who was waiting to join him in the proposed robbery (it might be murder) in the Allée des Veuves.

About the end of an hour Rodolph began, though slowly, to resume his consciousness. He found himself extended on the ground, in the midst of thick darkness; he extended his hand and touched the stone stairs descending to the vault; a sensation of extreme cold about his feet induced him to endeavour, by feeling the ground, to ascertain the cause: his fingers dabbled in a pool of water.

With a violent effort he contrived to seat himself on the lower step of the staircase; the giddiness arising from his fall subsided by degrees, and as he became able to extend his limbs he found, to his great joy, that, though severely shaken and contused, no bones were broken. He listened: the only sound that reached his ear was a low, dull, pattering, but continued noise, of which he was then far from divining the cause.

As his senses became more clear, so did the circumstances, to which he had been the unfortunate victim, return to his imagination; and just as he had recalled each particular, and was deeply considering the possible result of the whole, he became aware that his feet were wholly submerged in water: it had, indeed, risen above his ankle.

In the midst of the heavy gloom and deep silence which surrounded him, he heard still the same dull, trickling sound, he had observed before; and now the matter was clear to him. Now, indeed, he comprehended all the horrors of his situation: the cave was filling with water, arising from the fearful and formidable overflowing of the Seine—the dungeon in which he had been thrown was doubtless beneath the level of the river, and was chosen by his gaolers for that purpose, as offering a slow though certain means of destruction.

The conviction of his danger recalled Rodolph entirely to himself. Quick as lightning he made his way up the damp, slippery stairs; arrived at the top, he came in contact with a thick door: he tried in vain to open it—its massy hinges resisted his most vigorous efforts to force them.

At this moment of despair and danger his first thought was for Murphy. "If he be not on his guard those monsters will murder him!" cried he. "It will be I who shall have caused his death—my good, my faithful Murphy!" This cruel thought nerved the arm of Rodolph with fresh vigour, and again he bent his most powerful energy to endeavour to force the ponderous door. Alas! the thickly plated iron with which it was covered mocked his utmost efforts; and sore, weary, and exhausted, he was compelled to relinquish the fruitless task. Again he descended into the cave, in hopes of obtaining something which might serve as a lever to force the hinges or wrench the fastenings. Groping against the slimy walls, he felt himself continually treading on some sort of round elastic bodies, which appeared to slip from under his feet and to scramble for safety past him—they were rats, driven by the fast-rising water from their retreats. Groping about the place on all fours, with the water half-way up his leg, Rodolph felt in all directions for the weapon he so much desired to find; nothing but the damp walls met his touch however, and in utter despair he resumed his position at the top of the steps: of the thirteen stairs which composed the flight, three were already under water.

Thirteen had ever been Rodolph's unlucky number. There are moments when the strongest minds are under the influence of superstitious ideas, and at this juncture Rodolph viewed the fatal amount of stairs as an ill augury. Again the possible fate of Murphy recurred to him, and, as if inspired by a fresh hope, he eagerly felt around the door to discover some slight chink, or opening, by which his cries for help might be heard. In vain: the dampness of the soil had swollen the wood, and joined it hermetically to the wet slimy earth.

Rodolph next tried the powers of his voice, and shouted with the fullest expansion of his lungs, trusting that his cries for assistance might reach the adjoining cabaret; and then, tired and exhausted, sat down to listen. Nothing was to be heard—no sound disturbed the deep silence which reigned but the drop, drop, drop, the dull, trickling, monotonous bubbling of the fast-increasing waters.

His last hope extinguished, Rodolph seated himself in gloomy despair, and, leaning his back against the door, bewailed the perilous situation of his faithful friend, perhaps at that very moment struggling beneath the assassin's knife. Bitterly did he then regret his rash and venturesome projects, however good and generous the motives by which he had been instigated; and severely did he reproach himself for having taken advantage of the devotion of Murphy, who, rich, honoured, and esteemed by all who knew him, had quitted a beloved wife and child to assist Rodolph in the bold undertaking he had imposed on himself.

During these sorrowful reflections the water was still rising rapidly, and five stairs only now remained dry. Rodolph now found himself compelled to assume a standing position, though in so doing his forehead was brought in close contact with the very top of the vault. He calculated the probable duration of his mortal agony—of the period which must elapse ere this slow, inch-like death would put a period to his misery; he bethought him of the pistol he carried with him, and, at the risk of injuring himself in the attempt, he determined to fire it off against the door, so as to disturb some of the fastenings by the concussion: but here, again, a disappointment awaited him—the pistol was nowhere to be found, and he could but conclude it had fallen from his pocket during his struggle with the Schoolmaster. But for his deep concern on Murphy's account, Rodolph would have met his death unmoved—his conscience acquitted him of all intentional offence; nay, it solaced him with the recollection of good actually performed, and much more meditated. To the decrees of an all-wise and inscrutable Providence he resigned himself, and humbly accepted his present punishment as the just reward for a criminal action as yet unexpiated.

A fresh trial of his fortitude awaited him. The rats, still pursued by the fast-gathering waters, finding no other means of escape, sought refuge from one step to another, ascending as fast as the rising flood rendered their position untenable, unable to scale the perpendicular walls or doors they availed themselves of the vestments of Rodolph, whose horror and disgust rose to an indescribable degree as he felt their cold, clammy paws, and wet, hairy bodies, crawling or clinging to him: in his attempts to repulse them, their sharp, cold bite, inflicted on him the most acute agony, while his face and hands streamed with blood from the multitude of wounds received. Again he called for help, shouted aloud, and almost screamed in his pain and wretchedness. Alas! the dull echo of the vault and the gurgling waters alone replied. A few short moments, and he would be bereft even of the power of calling upon God or man to help him: the rapidly rising flood had now reached his very throat, and ere long would have ascended to his lips.

The choked air began, too, to fail in the narrow space now left it, and the first symptoms of asphyxia began to oppress Rodolph: the arteries of

his temples beat violently, his head became giddy, and the faint sickness of death seemed to make his chest heave convulsively. Already were the waters gurgling in his ears; a dizziness of sight and a confusion of ideas had well-nigh deprived him of all powers of sight or sound; the last glimmer of reason was well-nigh shaken from her throne, when hasty steps and the sound of voices on the other side of the door were heard.

Hope recalled his expiring strength, and, making one powerful effort, Rodolph was able to distinguish the following words, after which all consciousness forsook him:

"Did I not tell you so? there, you see there is no one here!"

"Deuce take it! no more there is," replied the voice of the Chourineur, in a tone of vexation and disappointment. And the sounds died away.

Rodolph, utterly exhausted, had no longer power to sustain himself; his limbs sunk from under him, and he slid unresistingly down the stone steps.

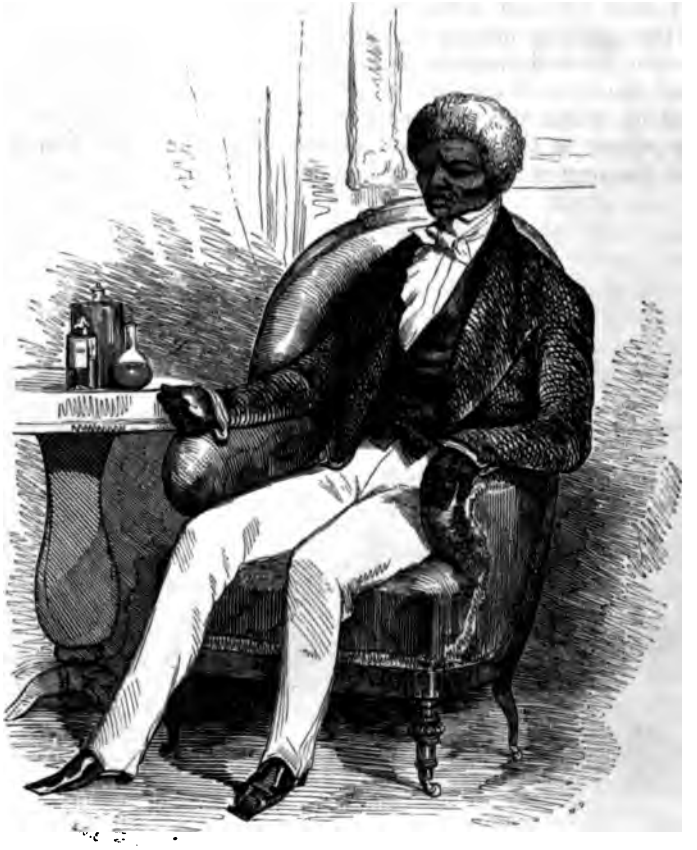
All at once the door of the vault was abruptly opened from the other side, and the swelling masses contained in the inner vault, glad to find a further outlet, rushed onwards as though bursting through the gates of a sluice, and the Chourineur, whose opportune return shall be accounted for by and by, seized the two arms of Rodolph, who, half-dead, had mechanically clung to the threshold of the door, and bore him from the black and rushing waters which had nigh proved his grave.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SICK-NURSE.

Snatched by the Chourineur from a certain death, and removed to the house in the Allée des Veuves which had been reconnoitred by the Chouette previously to the attempt on it by the Schoolmaster, Rodolph was placed in bed, in a comfortably furnished apartment: a cheerful fire was burning on the hearth. A lamp, placed on a neighbouring table, diffused a strong clear light; while the bed of Rodolph, shaded by thick curtains of green damask, remained protected from the glare, and in the shadow of its deep recess.

A Negro of middling stature, with white hair and eyebrows, wearing



an orange and green riband at the button-hole of his blue coat, sat by the bedside, holding in his right hand a seconds' watch, which he appeared

to consult while counting with his left the beating of Rodolph's pulse. The expression of the Negro's countenance was at once sad and pensive, and he continued from time to time to gaze on the sleeping man with the most tender solicitude.

The Chourineur, clad in rags and soiled with mud, stood motionless, with folded arms, at the foot of the bed; his red beard was long and matted, in disorder; his thick bushy hair was tangled with mud and wet, which still dripped from it; while his hard, bronzed features were marked by the most profound pity for the patient: hardly venturing to breathe lest the heaving of his huge chest should disturb the invalid, he

awaited with the most intense anxiety the result of the doctor's observations on the sick man's state; then, as though to wile away the fearful apprehension of an unfavourable opinion, he continued to deliver his thoughts aloud, after the following manner:

"Who would think, now, to see him lying there so helpless, he could ever have been the man to give me such a precious drubbing as I got from him? I dare say, though, he will soon be up again, well and strong as ever. Don't you think so, M. le Docteur? 'Faith, I only wish he could drum himself well upon my back; I'd lend it him as long as he liked. But, perhaps, that would shake him too much, and over-fatigue him: would it, sir?" addressing the Negro, whose only reply was an impatient wave of the hand.

The Chourineur was instantly silent.

"The draught!" said the doctor.

The Chourineur, who had respectfully left his nailed shoes at the door, at these words arose and walked towards the table indicated by the Negro's finger; going on the very top of his toes, drawing up his legs, extending his arms, and swelling out his back and shoulders, in a manner so ludicrous as, under other circumstances, would have been highly diverting. The poor fellow seemed endeavouring to collect his whole weight, so that no portion of it should touch the floor; which, in spite of his energetic efforts to prevent it, groaned beneath his ponderous limbs as they moved towards the desired spot. Unfortunately, between his over-anxiety to acquit himself well in his important mission, and his fear of dropping the delicate phial he was bringing so over-carefully, he grasped the slight neck so tightly in his huge hand that it shivered to atoms, and the precious liquid was expended on the carpet.

At the sight of this unfortunate mischance the Chourineur remained in mute astonishment, one of his huge legs in the air, his toes nervously contracted, and looking with a stupified air alternately from the doctor to the fragments of the bottle, and from that to the morsel his thumb and finger were yet tightly holding.

"Awkward devil!" exclaimed the Negro, impatiently.

"Yes, that I am!" responded the Chourineur, as though grateful for the sound of a voice to break the frightful bewilderment of his ideas.

"Ah!" cried the Æsculapius, observing the table attentively, "happily you took the wrong phial—I wanted the other one."

"What, that little one with the red stuff?" inquired the unlucky sick-nurse, in a low and humble tone.

"Of course I mean that: why, there is no other left."

The Chourineur, turning quickly round upon his heels after his old military fashion, crushed the fragments of glass which lay on the carpet beneath his feet. More delicate ones might have suffered severely from the circumstance, but the *ex-débardeur* had a pair of natural sandals, hard as the hoofs of a horse.

"Have a care!" cried the physician: "you will hurt yourself!"

To this caution the Chourineur paid no attention, but seemed wholly absorbed in so discharging his new mission as should effectually destroy all recollection of his late clumsiness. It was really beautiful to behold the scrupulous delicacy and lightness of touch with which, spreading out his two first fingers, he seized the fragile crystal; avoiding all use of the unlucky thumb whose undue pressure, he rightly conceived, had brought about his previous accident, he kept so widely stretched from his fore-finger that a butterfly might have passed between, with outspread wings,

without losing one atom of its golden plumage. The black doctor trembled lest all this caution should lead to a second misadventure, but, happily, the phial reached its destination in safety. As the Chourineur approached the bed, he again smashed beneath his tread some of the fallen relics of the former potion.

"The deuce take you, man! do you want to *maim* yourself for life?"

"*Lame* myself?" asked the eager nurse.

"Why, yes: you keep walking upon glass as though you were trying for it."

"Oh, bless you! never mind that; the soles of my feet are hard as iron: must be something sharper than glass could hurt them."

"A teaspoon ——" said the doctor.

The Chourineur recommenced his *évolutions sylphidiques*, and returned with the article required.

After having swallowed a few spoonsful of the mixture, Rodolph began to stir in his bed, and faintly moved his hands.

"Good! good! he is recovering from his stupor," said the doctor, speaking to himself. "That bleeding has relieved him: he is now out of danger."

"Saved? Bravo! Vive la Charte!" exclaimed the Chourineur, in the full burst of his joy.

"Hold your tongue! and, pray, be quiet!" said the Negro, in a tone of command.

"To be sure I will, Monsieur le Médecin."

"His pulse is becoming regular—very well, indeed—excellent ——"

"And that poor friend of M. Rodolph's—body and bones of me!—when he comes to know that —— But, then, luckily ——"

"Silence! I say."

"Certainly, M. le Docteur."

"And sit down."

"But, M. le ——"

"Sit down, I tell you! You disturb me, twisting and fidgeting about in that manner—you distract my attention. Come, sit down at once, and keep still."

"But, doctor, don't you perceive I am as dirty as a pile of floating wood just going to be unloaded?—all slime and wet, you see. I should spoil the furniture."

"Then sit down on the ground."

"I should soil the carpet."

"Do what you like, but, for Heaven's sake, be quiet!" said the doctor, in a tone of impatience; then, throwing himself into an arm-chair, he leaned his head upon his clasped hands, and appeared lost in deep reflection.

After a moment of profound meditation, the Chourineur, less from any need he felt for repose than in obedience to the doctor's commands, took a chair with the utmost precaution, turned it upside down with an air of intense self-satisfaction at having at length devised a plan to act in strict conformity with the orders received, and yet avoid all risk of soiling the silken cushion: having laid the back on the ground he proceeded, after all manner of delicate arrangements, to take his seat on the outer

rails; but, unhappily, the Chourineur was entirely ignorant of the laws of the lever and the equilibrium of bodies—the chair overbalanced, and the luckless individual seated thereon, in endeavouring to save himself from falling, by an involuntary movement caught hold of a small stand, on which was a tray containing some tea-things.

At the formidable noise caused by so many falling articles clattering upon the head of the unfortunate cause of all this discord and havoc, the doctor sprung from his seat; while Rodolph, awaking with a start, raised himself on his elbow, looked about him with an anxious and perturbed glance, then passing his hand over his brows, as though trying to arrange his ideas, he inquired,

"Where is Murphy?"

"Your royal highness need be under no apprehensions on his account," answered the Negro, respectfully: "there is every hope of his recovery."

"Recovery! He is, then, wounded?"

"Unhappily, my lord, he is."

"Where is he? let me see him!" And Rodolph endeavoured to rise, but fell back again, overcome by weakness and the intense pain he felt from his many and severe contusions. "Since I cannot walk," cried he, at length, "let me be instantly carried to Murphy—this moment!"

"My lord, he sleeps at present: it would be highly dangerous, at this particular juncture, to expose him to the slightest agitation."

"You are deceiving me, and he is dead! He has been murdered! and I—I am the wretched cause of it!" cried Rodolph in a tone of agony, raising his clasped hands towards heaven.

"My lord knows that his servant is incapable of a falsehood. I

assert by my honour, that, although severely wounded, Murphy lives, and that his chance of recovery is all but certain."

"You say that but to prepare me for more disastrous tidings: he lies, doubtless, wounded past all hope; and he, my faithful friend, will die!"

"My lord ——"

"Yes, you are seeking to deceive me till all is over. But I will see him—I will judge for myself: the sight of a friend cannot be hurtful. Let me be instantly removed to his chamber."

"Once more, my lord, I pledge my solemn assurance, that, barring chances not likely to occur, Murphy will soon be convalescent."

"My dear David, may I indeed believe you?"

"You may, indeed, my lord."

"Hear me. You know the high opinion I entertain of your ability and knowledge, and that, from the hour in which you were attached to my household, you have possessed my most unbounded confidence—never, for one instant, have I doubted your great skill and perfect acquaintance with your profession; but I conjure you, if a consultation be necessary ——"

"My lord, that would have been my first thought, had I seen the slightest reason for such a step; but, up to the present moment, it would be both useless and unnecessary. And, besides, I should be somewhat tenacious of introducing strangers into the house until I knew whether your orders of yesterday ——"

"But how has all this happened?" said Rodolph, interrupting the black. "Who saved me from drowning in that horrid cellar? I have a confused recollection of having heard the Chourineur's voice there: was I mistaken?"

"Not at all mistaken, my lord. But let the brave fellow, to whom all praise is due, relate the affair in which he was the principal actor himself."

"Where is he? where is he?"

The doctor looked about for the recently elected sick-nurse, and at length found him, thoroughly silenced and ashamed by his late tumble, ensconced behind the curtains of the bed.

"Here he is," said the doctor: "he looks somewhat shamefaced."

"Come forward, my brave fellow!" said Rodolph, extending his hand to his preserver.

The confusion of the poor Chourineur was still further increased from having, when behind his curtain, heard the black doctor address Rodolph continually as "my lord," or "your royal highness."

"Approach, my friend—my deliverer!" said Rodolph; "and give me your hand."

"I beg pardon, sir—I mean, my lord—no, highness—no ——"

"Call me M. Rodolph, as you used to do: I like it better."

"And so do I—it comes so much easier to one. But be so good as to excuse my hand: I have done so much work lately, that ——"

"Your hand, I tell you—your hand!"

Overcome by this kind and persevering command, the Chourineur timidly extended his black and horny palm, which Rodolph warmly shook.

"Now, then, sit down, and tell me all about it—how you discovered the cellar. But I think I can guess. The Schoolmaster?"

"We have him in safety," said the black doctor.

"Yes, he and the Chouette, tied together like two rolls of tobacco. A pair of pretty creatures they look, as ever you would wish to see, and, I doubt not, sick enough of each other's company by this time."

"And my poor Murphy! What a selfish wretch must I be to think only of myself! Where is he wounded, David?"

"In the right side, my lord; but, fortunately, towards the lower false rib."

"Oh, I must have a deep and terrible revenge for this! David, I depend upon your assistance."

"My lord knows full well that I am wholly devoted to him, both body and soul," replied the Negro, coldly.

"But how, my noble fellow, were you able to arrive here in time?" said Rodolph to the Chourineur.

"Why, if you please, my lor —— no, sir—highness —— Rodolph —I had better begin by the beginning ——"

"Quite right. I am listening—go on. But mind, you are only to call me Monsieur Rodolph."

"Very well. You know that last night you told me, after you returned from the country, where you had gone with poor Goualeuse, 'Try and find the Schoolmaster in the Cité; tell him you know of a capital '*put-up*,' that you have refused to join it, but that if he will take your place he has only to be to-morrow (that 's to-day) at the barrier of Bercy, at the Panier-Fleuri, and there he will see the man who has 'made the plant' (*qui a nourri le poupard*).'"

"Well."

"On leaving you, I pushed on briskly for the Cité. I goes to the ogress's—no Schoolmaster; then to the Rue Saint Eloi; on to the Rue aux Fêves; then to the Rue de la Vieille Draperie—couldn't find my man. At last I stumbled upon him and that old devil's kin, Chouette, in the front of Notre Dame, at the shop of a tailor, who is a *fence** and thief: they were 'sporting the blunt' which they had prigged from the tall gentleman in black, who wanted to do something to you; they

* Receiver of stolen goods.

bought themselves some *toggery*. The Chouette bargained for a red shawl—an old monster! I told my tale to the Schoolmaster and he

snapped at it, and said he would be at the rendezvous accordingly. So far so good. This morning, according to your orders, I ran here to bring you the answer. You said to me, 'My lad, return to-morrow before day-break; you must pass the day in the house, and in the evening you will see something which will be worth seeing.' You did not let out more than that, but I was 'fly,' and said to myself, 'This is a 'dodge' to catch the Schoolmaster to-morrow, by laying a right bait for him. He is a —— scoundrel; he murdered the cattle-dealer, and, as they say, another person besides, in the Rue du Roule. I see all about it ——' "

"My mistake was not to have told you all, my good fellow; then this horrible result would not have occurred."

"That was your affair, M. Rodolph; all that concerned me was to serve you: for, truth to say, I don't know how or why, but, as I have told you before, I feel as if I were your bull-dog. But that 's enough. I said, then, 'M. Rodolph pays me for my time, so my time is his, and I will employ it for him.' Then an idea strikes me: the Schoolmaster is cunning, he may suspect a trap. M. Rodolph will propose to him the job for to-morrow, it is true, but the 'downy cove' is likely enough to come to-day and lurk about, and reconnoitre the ground, and if he is suspicious of M. Rodolph he will bring some other *cracksman* (robber) with him, and do the trick on his own account. To prevent this, I said to myself, 'I must go and plant myself somewhere where I may get a view of the walls, the garden-gate—there is no other entrance. If I find a snug corner, as it rains, I will remain there all day, perhaps all night, and to-morrow morning I shall be all right and ready to go to M. Rodolph's.' So I goes to the Allée des Veuves to place myself, and

what should I see but a small tavern, not ten paces from your door! I entered and took my seat near the window, in a room on the ground-floor. I called for a quart of drink and a quart of nuts, saying I expected some friends—a hump-backed man and a tall woman. I chose them because it would appear more natural. I was very comfortably seated, and kept my eye on the door. It rained cats and dogs—no one passed: night came on ——"

"But," interrupted Rodolph, "why did you not go at once to my house?"

"You told me to come the next day morning, M. Rodolph, and I didn't dare return there sooner: I should have looked like an intruder—a sneak (*brosseur*), as the troopers call it. You understand? Well, there I was at the window of the wine-shop, cracking my nuts and drinking my liquor, when, through the fog, I saw the Chouette approach, accompanied by Bras Rouge's brat, little Tortillard. 'Ah, ah!' said I to myself, 'now the farce begins!' Well, the little hound of a child hid himself in one of the ditches of the Allée, and was evidently on the look-out. As for that —— the Chouette, she takes off her bonnet, puts it into her pocket, and rings the gate-bell. Our poor friend, M. Murphy, opened the door, and the one-eyed mother of mischief tosses up her arms and makes her way into the garden. I could have kicked myself for not being able to make out what the Chouette was up to. At last out she comes, puts on her bonnet, says two words to Tortillard who returns to his hole, and then 'cuts her stick.' I say to myself, 'Caution! no blunder now! Tortillard has come with the Chouette: then the Schoolmaster and M. Rodolph are at Bras Rouge's. The Chouette has come out to reconnoitre about the house: then, sure as a gun, they 'll *try it on* this very night! If they do, M. Rodolph, who believes they will not go to work till to-morrow, is quite over-reached; and if he is over-reached, I ought to go to Bras Rouge's and see for him. True: but then suppose that the Schoolmaster arrives in the meantime—that 's to be thought of. Suppose I go to the house and see M. Murphy—mind your eye! that urchin Tortillard is near the door; he will hear me ring the bell, see me, and give the word to the Chouette; and if she returns, that will spoil all; and the more particularly as perhaps M. Rodolph has, after all, made his arrangements for this evening.' Confound it! these yes and no bothered my brain tremendously. I was quite bewildered, and saw nothing clear before me. I didn't know what to do for the best, so I said, 'I'll walk out, and perhaps the clear air will brighten my thoughts a bit.' I went out, and the open air cleared my brain; so I took off my blouse and my neckhandkerchief, I went to the ditch where Tortillard lay, and taking the young devil's kin by the cuff of his neck—how he did wriggle, and twist, and scuffle, and scratch!—I put him into my blouse, tying up one end with the sleeves and the bottom tightly with my cravat. He could breathe very well. Well, then I took the bundle under my arm, and passing a low, damp garden, surrounded by a little wall, I threw the brat Tortillard into the midst of a cabbage-bed. He squeaked like a sucking-pig, but nobody could hear him two steps off. I cut off: it was time. I climbed up one of the high trees in the Allée, just in front of your door, and over the ditch in which Tortillard had been stationed. Ten minutes afterwards I heard footsteps: it was raining still, and the

night was very dark. I listened—it was the Chouette. 'Tortillard! Tortillard!' says she, in a low voice. 'It rains, and the little brat is tired of waiting,' said the Schoolmaster, swearing: 'if I catch him, I'll skin him alive!' 'Fourline, take care!' replied the Chouette. 'Perhaps he has gone to warn us of something that has happened—maybe, some trap for us. The young fellow would not make the attempt till ten o'clock.' 'That's the very reason,' replies the Schoolmaster: 'it is now only seven o'clock. You saw the money—nothing venture nothing have. Give me the ripping chisel and the *jemmy* ——'"

"What instruments are they?" asked Rodolph.

"They came from Bras Rouge's. Oh, he has a well-furnished house! In a crack the door is opened. 'Stay where you are,' said the Schoolmaster to the Chouette; 'keep a bright look-out, and give me the signal if you hear any thing.' 'Put your *pinking-iron* in the button-hole of your waistcoat, that you may have it handy,' said the old hag. The Schoolmaster entered the garden, and I instantly coming down from the

tree fell on the Chouette. I silenced her with two blows of my fist—my new style—and she fell without a word. I ran into the garden, but, thunder and lightning, M. Rodolph! it was too late ——"

"Poor Murphy!"

"He was struggling on the ground with the Schoolmaster at the entrance, and, although wounded, he held his voice and made no cry for help. Excellent man! he is like a good dog—bites, but doesn't bark. Well, I went bang, heads or tails, at it, hitting the Schoolmaster on the shoulder, which was the only place I could at the moment touch. 'Vive la Charte! it's I!' 'The Chourineur!' shouts M. Murphy. 'Ah, villain! where do you come from?' cries out the Schoolmaster, quite off his guard at that. 'What's that to you?' says I, fixing one of his legs between my knees, and grasping his '*fin*' with my other hand: it was that in which

he held his dagger. 'And M. Rodolph?' asked M. Murphy of me, whilst doing all in his power to aid me——"

"Worthy, kind-hearted creature!" murmured Rodolph, in a tone of deep distress.

"'I know nothing of him,' says I; 'this scoundrel, perhaps, has killed him.' And then I went with redoubled strength at the Schoolmaster, who tried to stick me with his larding-pin; but I lay with my breast on his arm, and so he only had his fist at liberty. 'You are, then, quite alone?' says I to M. Murphy, whilst we still struggled desperately with the Schoolmaster. 'There are people close at hand,' he replied; 'but they did not hear me cry out.' 'Is it far off?' 'They would be here in ten minutes.' 'Let us call out for help, there are passers-by who will come and help us.' 'No, as we have got him we must hold him here. But I am growing weak—I am wounded.' 'Thunder and lightning! then run and get assistance, if you have strength left: I will try and hold him.' M. Murphy then disengaged himself, and I was alone with the Schoolmaster. I don't want to brag, but, by Jove! these were moments when I was not having a holyday. We were half on the ground, half on the bottom step of the flight. I had my arms round the neck of the villain—my cheek against his cheek; and he was puffing like a bull—I heard his teeth grind. It was dark—it rained pouring: the lamp left in the passage lighted us a little. I had twisted one of my legs round his, but, in spite of that, his loins were so powerful that he moved himself and me on to the bare ground. He tried to bite me, but couldn't: I never felt so strong. Thunder! my heart beat, but it was in the right place. I said, 'I am like a man who is grappling with a mad dog, to prevent him from fastening on some passer-by.' 'Let me go, and I will do you no harm,' said the Schoolmaster, in an exhausted voice. 'What! a coward?' says I to him. 'So, then, your pluck is in your strength? So you wouldn't have stabbed the cattle-dealer at Poissy, and robbed him, if he had only been as strong as me—eh?' 'No,' says he; 'but I will kill you as I did him.' And saying that, he made so violent a heave, and gave so powerful a jerk with his legs at the same time, that he half threw me over: if I had not kept a tight hold of his wrist which held the stiletto, I was done for. At this moment my left hand was seized with the cramp, and I was compelled to loosen my hold: that nearly spoiled all, and I said to myself, 'I am now undermost and he at top—he'll kill me. Never mind, I had rather be in my place than his: M. Rodolph said that I had heart and honour.' I felt it was all over with me, and at that moment I saw the Chouette standing close by us, with her glaring eye and red shawl. Thunder and lightning! I thought I had the nightmare. 'Finette,' cries the Schoolmaster, 'I have let fall the knife: pick it up—there, there, under him—and strike him home—in the back—between the shoulders: quick! quick!' 'Only wait, only wait till I find it—till I see it, *fourline*.' And then the cursed Chouette turned and poked about us, like an old bird of mischief as she was. At last she found the dagger and sprung towards it, but as I was flat on my belly I gave her a kick in the stomach, which sent her neck over crop: she got up, and in a desperate rage. I could do no more; I still held on and struggled with the Schoolmaster, but he kept giving me such dreadful blows on my jaw that I was about to let go my hold, when

I saw three or four armed men who came down the stairs, and M. Murphy, pale as ashes, and with difficulty supporting himself with the assistance of

the doctor here. They seized hold of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette, and soon bound them hand and foot. That was not all—I still wanted M. Rodolph. I sprang at the Chouette: remembering the tooth of the poor dear Goualeuse, I grasped her arm and twisted it, saying, 'Where is M. Rodolph?' She bore it well, and silently. I took a second turn, and then she screeched out, 'At Bras Rouge's, in the vault at the Bleeding Heart!' All right! As I went, I meant to take Tortillard from his cabbage-bed, as it was on my road. I looked for him, but only found my blouse—he had gnawed his way out with his teeth. I reached the 'Bleeding Heart,' and I laid hold of Bras Rouge. 'Where is the young man who came here this evening with the Schoolmaster?' 'Don't squeeze so hard, and I 'll tell you. They wanted to play him a trick and shut him up in my cellar; we'll go now and let him out.' We went down, but there was no one to be seen. 'He must have gone out whilst my back was turned,' says Bras Rouge: 'you see plain enough he is not here.' I was going away sad enough, when, by the light of the lantern, I saw at the bottom of the cellar another door. I ran towards it and opened the door, and had, as it were, a pail of water thrown at me. I saw your two poor arms in the air. I fished you out and brought you here on my back, as there was nobody at hand to get a coach. That 's all my tale, M. Rodolph; and I may say, without bragging, that I am satisfied with myself."

"My man, I owe my life to you: it is a heavy debt, but be assured I will pay it. David, will you go and learn how Murphy is," added Rodolph, "and return again instantly?"

The black went out.

"Where is the Schoolmaster, my good fellow?"

"In another room, with the Chouette. You will send for the police, M. Rodolph?"

"No."

"You surely will not let him go! Ah, M. Rodolph, none of that nonsensical generosity! I say again, he is a mad dog—let the passengers look out!"

"He will never bite again, be assured."

"Then you are going to shut him up somewhere?"

"No: in half an hour he will leave this house."

"The Schoolmaster?"

"Yes."

"Without gens d'armes?"

"Yes."

"*He* will go out from here, and free?"

"Free."

"And quite alone?"

"Quite alone."

"But he will go ——"

"Wherever he likes," said Rodolph, interrupting the Chourineur with a meaning smile.

The black returned.

"Well, David, well, and how is Murphy?"

"He sleeps, my lord," said the doctor, despondingly: "his respiration is very difficult."

"Not out of danger?"

"His case is very critical, my lord; yet there is hope."

"Oh, Murphy! vengeance! vengeance!" exclaimed Rodolph, in a tone of concentrated rage. Then he added, "David, a word ——"

And he whispered something in the ear of the black. He started back.

"Do you hesitate?" said Rodolph. "Yet I have often suggested this idea to you: the moment is come to put it into practice."

"I do not hesitate, my lord: the suggestion is well worthy the consideration of the most elevated jurists, for this punishment is at the same time terrible and yet fruitful for repentance. In this case it is most applicable. Without enumerating the crimes which have accumulated to send this wretch to the Bagne for his life, he has committed three murders —the cattle-dealer, Murphy, and yourself: it is in his case justice ——"

"He will have before him an unlimited horizon for expiation," added Rodolph. After a moment's silence he resumed: "And five thousand francs will suffice, David?"

"Amply, my lord."

"My good fellow," said Rodolph to the bewildered Chourineur, "I have two words to say to M. David; will you go into that chamber on the other side, where you will see a large red pocket-book on a bureau, open it and take out five notes of a thousand francs each, and bring them to me."

"And," inquired the Chourineur, involuntarily, "who are those five thousand francs for?"

"For the Schoolmaster. And do you, at the same time, tell them to bring him in here."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PUNISHMENT.

THE scene we are about to describe took place in a room hung with red, and brilliantly lighted. Rodolph, clothed in a long dressing-gown of black velvet, which increased the pallor of his features, was seated before a large table covered with a green cloth. On this table was the School-

master's pocket-book, the pinchbeck chain of the Chouette (to which was suspended the little *Saint Esprit* of lapis lazuli), the blood-stained stiletto with which Murphy had been stabbed, the crow-bar with which the door had been forced, and the five notes of a thousand francs each, which the Chourineur had fetched out of the next apartment.

The Negro doctor was seated at one side of the table, the Chourineur on the other. The Schoolmaster, tightly bound with cords, and unable

to move a limb, was placed in a large arm-chair on castors, in the middle of the saloon. The people who had brought in this man had withdrawn, and Rodolph, the doctor, the Chourineur, and the assassin, were left alone. Rodolph was no longer out of temper, but calm, sad, and collected: he was about to discharge a solemn, self-imposed, and important duty. The doctor was lost in meditation. The Chourineur felt an indescribable fear: he could not take his eyes off Rodolph. The Schoolmaster's countenance was ghastly: he was in an agony of fear. The most profound silence reigned within: nothing was heard but the splash, splash of the rain without, as it fell from the roof on to the pavement. Rodolph addressed the Schoolmaster:

"Anselm Duresnel, you have escaped from the Bagne at Rochefort, where you were condemned for life for forgery, robbery, and murder!"

"It 's false!" said the Schoolmaster, in a hollow voice, and looking about him with his restless and glaring glance.

"You are Anselm Duresnel, and you murdered and robbed a cattle-dealer on the road to Poissy ——"

"It 's a lie!"

"You shall confess it presently."

The scoundrel looked at Rodolph with an air of astonishment.

"This very night you came here to rob, and you have stabbed the master of this house ——"

"It was you who suggested this robbery!" assuming an air of assurance. "I was attacked, and I defended myself."

"The man you stabbed did not attack you—he was unarmed. True, I did suggest this robbery to you—I 'll tell you why. Last night only, after having robbed a man and woman in the Cité, you offered to kill me for a thousand francs ——"

"I heard him," said the Chourineur.

The Schoolmaster darted at him a glance of deadliest hate.

Rodolph continued:

"You see there was no occasion to tempt you to do mischief."

"You are not my judge, and I will not answer you another question."

"I 'll tell you why I proposed this robbery to you. I knew you were a runaway convict—you know the parents of the unfortunate girl, all whose misfortunes have been caused by your miserable accomplice the Chouette. I wished to draw you here by the temptation of a robbery, because this was the only temptation that could avail with you. Once in my power, I leave you the choice of being handed over to the hands of justice, which will make you pay with your head the assassination of the cattle-dealer ——"

"It is false! I did not commit that crime."

"Or of being conducted out of France, under my direction, to a place of perpetual confinement, where your lot will be less painful than at the Bagne: but I will only allow you this relaxation of punishment on condition that you give me the information which I desire to acquire. Condemned for life, you have broken away from your confinement, and by seizing upon you and placing you hereafter beyond the possibility of doing injury I serve society; and from your confession I may, perhaps, find the means of restoring to her family a poor creature much more unfortunate than guilty. This was my first intention—it was not legal:

but your escape and your fresh crimes forbid any such course on my part now, and place you beyond all law. Yesterday, by a remarkable revelation, I discovered that you are Anselm Duresnel ——"

"It 's false! I am not called Duresnel."

Rodolph took from the table the chain of the Chouette, and pointing to the little *Saint Esprit* of lapis lazuli said, in a threatening voice,

"Sacrilege! You have prostituted to an infamous wretch this holy relic — thrice holy, for your infant boy had this pious gift from his mother and grandmother!"

The Schoolmaster, dumbfounded at this discovery, lowered his head and made no response.

"You carried off your child from his mother fifteen years ago, and you alone possess the secret of his existence. I had in this an additional motive for laying hands on you when I had detected who you were. I seek no revenge for what you have done to me personally, but to-night you have again shed blood without provocation. The man you have assassinated came to you in full confidence, not suspecting your sanguinary purpose. He asked you what you wanted: 'Your money or your life!' and you stabbed him with your poniard."

"So M. Murphy said when I first came to his aid," said the doctor.

"It 's false! he lied!"

"Murphy never lies," said Rodolph, calmly. "Your crimes demand

a striking reparation. You came into this garden forcibly — you stabbed a man that you might rob him: you have committed another murder — you ought to die on this spot; but pity, respect for your wife and son, they shall save you from the shame of a scaffold. It will be said that you were killed in a brawl with weapons in your hand. Prepare, the means for your punishment are at hand."

Rodolph's countenance was implacable. The Schoolmaster had remarked in the next room two men, armed with carbines. His name was known: he thought they were going to make away with him and bury in the shade his later crimes, and thus spare his family the new opprobrium. Like his fellows, this wretch was as cowardly as he was ferocious. Thinking his hour was come he trembled, and cried "Mercy!"

"No mercy for you," said Rodolph. "If your brains are not blown out here, the scaffold awaits you ——"

"I prefer the scaffold—I shall live, at least, two or three months longer. Why, why should I be punished at once? Mercy! mercy!"

"But your wife—your son—they bear your name ——"

"My name is dishonoured already. If only for eight days, let me live! in mercy do!"

"Not even that contempt of life which is sometimes displayed by the greatest criminals!" said Rodolph, with disgust.

"Besides, the LAW forbids any one to take justice into their own hands," said the Schoolmaster, with assurance.

"The *Law!* the LAW!" exclaimed Rodolph. "Do you dare to invoke the law? you, who have always lived in open revolt and constant enmity against society?"

The ruffian bowed his head and made no answer; then added, in a more humble tone,

"At least for pity's sake, spare my life!"

"Will you tell me where your son is?"

"Yes, yes, I will tell you all I know."

"Will you tell me who are the parents of the young girl whose childhood the Chouette made one scene of torture?"

"In my pocket-book there are papers which will put you on the track of the persons who gave her to the Chouette."

"Where is your son?"

"Will you let me live?"

"First make a full confession."

"And then, when I have told you all ——" said the Schoolmaster with hesitation.

"You have killed him!"

"No, no! I have confided him to one of my accomplices, who, when I was apprehended, effected his escape."

"What did he do with him?"

"He brought him up, and gave him an education which fitted him to enter into a banking-house at Nantes, so that we might get information, manage an introduction to the banker, and so facilitate our plans. Although at Rochefort, and preparing for my escape, I arranged this plan and corresponded in cipher with my friend ——"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* his child! his son!! This man appals me!" cried Rodolph, with horror, and hiding his head between his hands.

"But it was only of forgery that we thought," exclaimed the scoundrel; "and when my son was informed what was expected of him, he was indignant, told all to his employer, and quitted Nantes. You will find in my pocket-book notes of all the steps taken to discover his traces. The last place we ascertained he had lived in was the Rue du Temple, where he was known under the name of François Germain: the exact

address is also in my pocket-book. You see I do not wish to conceal any thing—I have told you every thing I know. Now keep your promise. I only ask you to have me taken into custody for *this* night's robbery."

"And the cattle-merchant at Poissy?"

"That affair can never be brought to light—there are no proofs. I own it to *you*, in proof of the sincerity with which I am speaking, but before any other person I should deny all knowledge of the business."

"You confess it, then, do you?"

"I was destitute, without the smallest means of living—the Chouette instigated me to do it: but now I sincerely repent ever having listened to her. I do, indeed. Ah! would you but generously save me from the hands of justice, I would promise you most solemnly to forsake all such evil practices for the future."

"Be satisfied, your life shall be spared; neither will I deliver you into the hands of the law."

"Do you, then, pardon me?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, as though doubting what he heard. "Can it be? Can you be so generous as to forgive?"

"I both judge you and award your sentence," cried Rodolph, in a solemn tone. "I will not surrender you to the power of the laws, because they would condemn you to the galleys or the scaffold; and that must not be. No, for many reasons. The galleys would but open a fresh field for the developement of your brutal strength and villany, which would soon be exercised in endeavouring to obtain domination over the guilty or unfortunate beings you would be associated with, to render yourself a fresh object of horror or of dread: for even crime has its ambition, and yours has long consisted in a pre-eminence in vicious deeds and monstrous vices, while your iron frame would alike defy the labours of the oar or the chastisement of those set over you. And the strongest chains may be broken, the thickest wall pierced through—steep ramparts have been scaled before now—and you might one day burst your yoke and be again let loose upon society, like an infuriated beast, marking your passage with murder and destruction; for none would be safe from your Herculean strength, or from the sharpness of your knife: therefore such consequences must be avoided. But since the galleys might fail to stop your infamous career, how is society to be preserved from your brutal violence? The scaffold comes next in consideration ——"

"It is my life, then, you seek!" cried the ruffian. "My life! Oh, spare it!"

"Peace, coward! Hope not that I mean so speedy a termination to your just punishment. No, your eager craving after a wretched existence would prevent you from suffering the agony of anticipated death, and, far from dwelling upon the scaffold and the block, your guilty soul would be filled with schemes of escape and hopes of pardon: neither would you believe you were truly doomed to die till in the very grasp of the executioner; and even in that terrible moment it is probable that, brutalised by terror, you would be a mere mass of human flesh, offered up by justice as an expiatory offering to the manes of your victims. That mode of settling your long and heavy accounts will not half pay the debt. No, poor, wretched, trembling craven! we must devise a more terrific method

of atonement for you. At the scaffold, I repeat, you would cling to hope while one breath remained within you; wretch that you are, you would dare to hope! you, who have denied all hope and mercy to so many unhappy beings! No, no! unless you repent, and that with all your heart, for the misdeeds of your infamous life, I would (in this world, at least) shut out from you the very faintest glimmer of hope ——"

"What man is this? what have I ever done to injure *him?*—whence comes he thus to torture me?—where am I?" asked the Schoolmaster, in almost incoherent tones, and nearly frantic with terror.

Rodolph continued:

"If even you could meet death with a man's courage, I would not have you ascend the scaffold: for you it would be merely the arena in which, like many others, you would make a disgusting display of hardened ferocity; or, dying as you have lived, exhale your last sigh with an impious scoff or profane blasphemy. That must not be permitted. It is a bad example to set before a gazing crowd the spectacle of a condemned being making sport of the instrument of death, swaggering before the executioner, and yielding with an obscene jest the divine spark infused into man by the breath of a creating God. To punish the body is easily done; to save the soul is the great thing to be laboured for and desired. 'All sin may be forgiven,' said our blessed Saviour, but from the tribunal to the scaffold the passage is too short—time and opportunity are required to repent and make atonement: this leisure you shall have. May God grant that you turn it to the right purpose!"

The Schoolmaster remained utterly bewildered: for the first time in his life, a vague and confused dread of something more horrible far than death itself crossed his guilty mind—he trembled before the suggestions of his own imagination.

Rodolph went on:

"Anselm Duresnel, I will not sentence you to the galleys, neither shall you die ——"

"Then do you intend sending me to hell? or what are you going to do with me?"

"Listen!" said Rodolph, rising from his seat with an air of menacing authority. "You have wickedly abused the great bodily strength bestowed upon you; I will paralyse that strength: the strongest have trembled before you; I will make you henceforward shrink in the presence of the weakest of beings. Assassin! murderer! you have plunged God's creatures into eternal night; your darkness shall commence even in this life. Now—this very hour—your punishment shall be proportioned to your crimes. But," added Rodolph, with an accent of mournful pity, "the terrible judgment I am about to pronounce will, at least, leave the future open to your efforts for pardon and for peace. I should be guilty as you are were I, in punishing you, to seek only for vengeance, just as is my right to demand it: far from being unrelenting as death, your sentence shall bring forth good fruits for hereafter; far from destroying your soul, it shall help you to seek its salvation. If, to prevent you from further violating the commandments of your Maker, I for ever deprive you of the beauties of this outer world—if I plunge you into impenetrable darkness, with no other companion than the remembrance of your crimes, it is that you may incessantly contemplate their enormity. Yes,

separated for ever from this external world, your thoughts must needs revert to yourself, and your vision dwell internally upon the bygone scenes of your ill-spent life; and I am not without hope that such a mental and constantly presented picture will send the blush of shame even upon your hardened features, that your soul, deadened as it now is to every good and holy impulse, will become softened and tender by repentance. Your language, too, will be changed, and good and prayerful words take place of those daring and blasphemous expressions which now disgrace your lips. You are brutal and overbearing, because you are strong; you will become mild and gentle when you are deprived of that strength. Now your heart scoffs at the very mention of repentance, but the day will come when, bowed to the earth with deep contrition, you will bewail your victims in dust and ashes. You have degraded the intelligence placed within you by a supreme power—you have reduced it to the brutal instincts of rapine and murder; from a man formed after the image of his Creator, you have made yourself a beast of prey: one day, as I trust and believe, that intelligence will be purified by remorse, and rendered again guiltless through divine expiation. You, more inhuman than the beast which perisheth, have trampled on the tender feelings by which even animals are actuated—you have been the destroyer of your partner and your offspring. After a long life, entirely devoted to the expiation of your crimes, you may venture to implore of the Almighty the great though unmerited happiness of obtaining the pardon of your wife and son, and dying in their presence."

As Rodolph uttered these last words his voice trembled with emotion, and he was obliged to conclude.

The Schoolmaster's terrors had, during this long discourse, entirely yielded to an opinion that he was only to be subjected to a long lecture on morality, and so forth, and then discharged upon his own promise of amendment; for the many mysterious words uttered by Rodolph he looked upon as mere vague expressions intended to alarm him—nothing more. Still further reassured by the mild tone in which Rodolph had addressed him, the ruffian assumed his usually insolent air and manner as he said, bursting into a loud and vulgar laugh,

"Well done, upon my word! A very good sermon, and very well spoken! Only we must recollect where we leave off in our moral catechism, that we may begin all right next lesson-day. Come, let us have something lively now. What do you say, master; will you guess a charade or two, just to enliven us a bit?"

Instead of replying, Rodolph addressed the black doctor:

"Proceed, David! And if I do wrong, may the Almighty punish me alone!"

The Negro rang: two men entered. David pointed to a side-door, which opened into an adjoining closet.

The chair in which the Schoolmaster remained bound, so as to be incapable of the smallest movement, was then rolled into the ante-room.

"Are you going to murder me, then? Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the wretched man, as he was being removed.

"Gag him!" cried the Negro, entering the closet.

Rodolph and the Chourineur were left alone.

"Monsieur Rodolph," said the Chourineur, pale and trembling,

"M. Rodolph, what is going to be done? I never felt so frightened. Pray speak: I must be dreaming, surely. What have they done to the Schoolmaster? He does not cry out—all is so silent: it makes me more fearful still!"

At this moment David issued from the cabinet; his complexion had that livid hue peculiar to the Negro countenance, while his lips were ashy pale.

The men who had conveyed the Schoolmaster into the closet now replaced him, still bound in his chair, on the spot he had previously occupied in Rodolph's presence.

"Unbind him, and remove the gag!" exclaimed David.

There was a moment of fearful silence while the two attendants relieved the Schoolmaster of his gag and untied the cords which bound him to the chair. As the last ligature gave way he sprung up, his hideous countenance expressing rage, horror, and alarm. He advanced one step with extended hands, then falling back into the chair he uttered a cry of unspeakable agony, and, raising his hands towards the ceiling, exclaimed, with maddened fury,

"Blind, by Heaven!"

"Give him this pocket-book, David," said Rodolph.

The Negro placed a small pocket-book in the trembling hands of the Schoolmaster.

"You will find in that pocket-book wherewithal to provide yourself with a home and the means of living for the remainder of your days. Go, seek out some safe and solitary dwelling, where, by humble repentance, you may seek to propitiate an offended God! You are free! Go and repent; the Lord is merciful, and His ears are ever open to such as truly repent."

"Blind! quite blind!" repeated the Schoolmaster, mechanically grasping the pocket-book.

"Open the doors—let him depart!" said Rodolph.

"Blind! blind!" repeated the bewildered and discomfited ruffian.

"You are free; you have the means of providing for yourself: begone!"

"And whither am I to go?" exclaimed he, with the most unbounded rage. "You have taken away my sight; how, then, do I know in which direction to go? Call you not this a crime thus to abuse your power over one unhappily in your hands? thus to ——"

"To abuse my power!" repeated Rodolph, in a solemn voice. "And how have you employed the power granted to you? how used *your* superior strength?"

"Oh, Death! how gladly would I now accept you!" cried the wretched man. "To be henceforward at every one's mercy—to fear the weakest, the smallest object!—a child might now master me! Gracious God! what will become of me?"

"You have plenty of money."

"It will be taken from me!" cried the ruffian.

"Mark those words—'It will be taken from me!' See how they fill you with fear and dread! You have plundered so many, unmindful of their helpless, destitute condition,—begone!"

"For the love of God," cried the Schoolmaster, in a suppliant tone, "let some person lead me forth! What will become of me in the streets? Oh, in mercy kill me! take my miserable life! but do not turn me out thus wretched, thus helpless! Kill, for pity's sake, and save me from being crushed beneath the first vehicle I encounter!"

"No! Live and repent."

"Repent!" shouted the Schoolmaster, in a fearful voice. "Never! I will live for vengeance—for deep and fearful vengeance!" And again he threw himself from the chair, holding his clenched fists, in a menacing attitude, towards the ceiling, as though calling upon Heaven to witness the fixedness of his resolve. In an instant his step faltered; he again hesitated, as though fearful of a thousand dangers.

"Alas! alas! I cannot proceed—I dare not move! And I, lately so strong and so dreaded by all—look at me now! Yet no one pities me—no one cares for me—no hand is stretched out to help the wretched blind upon his lonely way!"

It is impossible to express the stupefaction and alarm expressed by the countenance of the Chourineur during this terrible scene. His rough features exhibited the deepest compassion for his fallen foe, and approaching Rodolph he said, in a low tone,

"Monsieur Rodolph, he was an accomplished villain, and has only got what he richly deserves: he wanted to murder me a little while ago, too. But he is now blind—he does not even know how to find his way out of the house, and he may be crushed to death in the streets; may I lead him to some safe place, where, at least, he may remain quiet for a time?"

"Nobly said!" replied Rodolph, kindly pressing the hand of the Chourineur. "Go, my worthy fellow! Go with him, by all means!"

The Chourineur approached the Schoolmaster and laid his hand on his shoulder: the miserable villain started.

"Who touches me?" asked he, in a husky voice.

"It is I."

"*I?* who? Who are you—friend or foe?"

"The Chourineur."

"And you have come to avenge yourself now you find I am incapable of protecting myself, I suppose?"

"Nothing of the sort. Here, take my arm: you cannot find the way out by yourself, let me lead you—there ——"

"You, Chourineur? You!"

"Yes, for all you doubt it: but you vex me by not seeming to like my help. Come—hold tight by me: I will see you all right before I leave you."

"Are you quite sure you do not mean me some harm? that you are only laying a trap to ensnare me?"

"I am not such a scoundrel as to take advantage of your misfortune. But let us begone. Come on, old fellow; it will be daylight directly."

"Day! which I shall never more behold! Day and night to me are henceforward all the same!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in such piteous tones that Rodolph, unable longer to endure this scene, abruptly retired, followed by David, who first dismissed his two assistants.

The Chourineur and the Schoolmaster remained alone. After a lengthened silence the latter spoke first, by inquiring whether it were really true that the pocket-book presented to him contained money?

"Yes, I can positively speak to its containing five thousand francs,"

replied the Chourineur, "since I put them in it with my own hand. With that sum you could easily place yourself to board with some quiet, good sort of people, who would look to you—in some retired spot in the country, where you might pass your days happily. Or would you like me to take you to the ogress's?"

"She! she would not leave me a rap."

"Well, then, will you go to Bras Rouge?"

"No, no! He would poison me first and rob me afterwards."

"Well, then, where shall I take you?"

"I know not. Happily for both you are no thief, Chourineur. Here, take my pocket-book, and conceal it carefully in my waistcoat, that La Chouette may not see it: she would plunder me of every sous."

"Oh, bless you! the Chouette is quite safe just now: she lies in the

Hôpital Beaujon. While I was struggling with you both to-night I happened to dislocate her leg, so she's obliged to lie up for the present."

"But what, in Heaven's name, shall I do with this black curtain continually before my eyes? In vain I try to push it away; it is still there, fixed, immovable; and on its surface I see the pale, ghastly features of those ——"

He shuddered, and said in a low, hoarse voice, "Chourineur, did I quite do for that man last night?"

"No."

"So much the better," observed the robber. And then, after some minutes' silence, he exclaimed, under a fresh impulse of ungovernable fury, "And it is you I have to thank for all this! Rascal! scoundrel! I hate you! But for you, I should have 'stiffened' my man and walked off with his money. My very blindness I owe to you: my curses upon you for your meddling interference! But through you I should have had my blessed eyes to see my own way with. How do I know what devil's trick you are planning at this moment?"

"Try to forget all that is past—it can't be helped now; and do not put yourself in such a terrible way—it is really very bad for you. Come, come along—now, no nonsense—will you? yes or no?—because I am regularly done up, and must get a short snooze somewhere. I can tell you I have had a bellyful of such doings, and to-morrow I shall get back to my timber-pile, and earn an honest dinner before I eat it. I am only waiting to take you wherever you decide upon going, and then on goes my nightcap and I goes to sleep."

"But how can I tell you where to take me, when I do not know myself? My lodging —— No, no, that will not do: I should be obliged to tell ——"

"Well, then, hark ye. Will you, for a day or two, make shift with my crib? I may meet with some decent sort of people, who, not knowing who you really are, would receive you as a boarder; and we might say you were a confirmed invalid, and required great care and perfect retirement. Now I think of it, there is a person of my acquaintance, living at Port St. Nicolas, has a mother, a very worthy woman, but in humble circumstances, residing at St. Mandé: very likely she would be glad to take charge of you. What do you say—will you come or not?"

"One may trust you, Chourineur: I am not at all fearful of going, money and all, to your place; happily you have kept yourself honest, amidst all the evil example others have set you."

"Ay, and even bore the taunts and jests you used to heap upon me, because I would not turn prig like yourself."

"Alas! who could foresee?"

"Now, you see, if I had listened to you, instead of trying to be of real service to you I should clean you out of all your cash."

"True, true. But you are a downright good fellow, and have neither malice nor hatred in your heart," said the unhappy Schoolmaster, in a tone of deep dejection and humility. "You are a vast deal better to me than, I fear, I should have been to you under the same circumstances."

"I believe you, too. Why, M. Rodolph himself told me I had both heart and honour."

"But who the devil is this M. Rodolph?" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, breaking out afresh at the mention of his name. "He is not a man; he is a monster—a fiend—a ——"

"Hold, hold!" cried the Chourineur. "Now you are going to have another fit, which is bad for *you* and very disagreeable to *me*, because it makes you abuse my friends. Come, are you ready? Shall we set forth on our journey?"

"We are going to your lodging, are we not, Chourineur?"

"Yes, yes, if you are agreeable."

"And you swear to me that you bear me no ill-will for the events of the last twelve hours?"

"Swear it? Of course I swear it. Why, I have no ill-will against you nor any body."

"And you are certain that he (*the Man*, I mean) is not dead?"

"I am as sure of it as that I am living myself."

"That will, at least, give me one crime the less to answer for. If they only knew —— And that little old man of the Rue du Roule—and that woman of the Canal Saint Martin —— But it is useless thinking of all those things now; I have enough to occupy my thoughts without trying to recall past misfortunes. Blind! blind!" repeated the miserable wretch, as, leaning on the arm of the Chourineur, he slowly took his departure from the house in the Allée des Veuves.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ISLE-ADAM.

A MONTH had elapsed since the occurrence of the events we have just narrated. We now conduct the reader into the little town of the Isle-Adam, situated in a delightful locality on the banks of the Oise, and at the foot of a forest.

The least things become great events in the country; and so the idlers of Isle-Adam, who were on the morning before us walking in the square before the church, were very anxiously bestirring themselves to learn when the individual would arrive who had recently become the purchaser of the most eligible premises for a butcher in that town, and which were exactly opposite to the church.

One of those idlers, more inquisitive than his companions, went and asked the butcher-boy, who, with a merry face and active hands, was very busy in completing the arrangements of the shop. This lad replied that he did not know who was the new proprietor, for he had bought the property through an agent. At this moment two persons, who had come from Paris in a cabriolet, alighted at the door of the shop.

The one was Murphy, quite cured of his wound, and the other the Chourineur. At the risk of repeating a vulgar saying, we will assert that the impression produced by *dress* is so powerful, that the guest of the "cribs" of the Cité was hardly to be recognised in his present attire. His countenance had undergone the same change: he had put off with his rags his savage, coarse, and vulgar air; and to see him walk with both his hands in the pockets of his long and warm coat of dark broad-cloth, he might have been taken for one of the most inoffensive citizens in the world.

"'Faith, my fine fellow, the way was long and the cold excessive; were they not?"

"Why, I really did not perceive it, M. Murphy: I am too happy, and joy keeps one warm. Besides, when I say happy, why ——"

"What?"

"Yesterday you came to seek for me at the Port Saint Nicolas, where I was unloading as hard as I could to keep myself warm. I had not seen you since the night when the white-haired Negro had put out the Schoolmaster's eyes. By Jove! it quite shook me, that affair did. And M. Rodolph, what a countenance!—he who looked so mild and gentle! I was quite frightened at that moment; I was, indeed ——"

"Well, what then?"

"You said to me, 'Good day, Chourineur.' 'Good day, M. Murphy,' says I. 'What, you are up again, I see! So much the better—so much the better. And M. Rodolph?' 'He was obliged to leave Paris some days after the affair of the Allée des Veuves, and he forgot you, my man.' 'Well, M. Murphy, I can only say that if M. Rodolph has forgotten me, why—I shall be very sorry for it, that's all.' 'I meant to say, my good fellow, that he had forgotten to recompense your services, but that he should always remember them.' So, M. Murphy, those words cheered me up again directly. *Tonnerre!* I—I shall never forget him. He told me I had heart and honour—that's enough."

"Unfortunately, my lad, Monseigneur left without giving any orders about you. I have nothing but what Monseigneur gives me, and I am unable to repay as I could wish all that I owe you personally."

"Come, come, M. Murphy, you are jesting with me."

"But why the devil did you not come back again to the Allée des Veuves after that fatal night? Then Monseigneur would not have left without thinking of you."

"Why, M. Rodolph did not tell me to do so, and I thought that, perhaps, he had no further occasion for me."

"But you might have supposed that he would, at least, desire to express his gratitude to you."

"Did you not tell me that M. Rodolph has not forgotten me, M. Murphy?"

"Well, well, don't let us say another word about it; only I have had a great deal of trouble to find you out. You do not now go to the ogress's?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Oh, from some foolish notions I have had."

"Very well. But to return to what you were telling me ——"

"To what, M. Murphy?"

"You told me, I am glad I have found you, and still happy, perhaps ——"

"Oh, yes, M. Murphy! Why, you see, when you came to where I was at work at the timber-yard, you said, 'My lad, I am not rich, but I can procure you a situation where your work will be easier than on the Quai, and where you will gain four francs a-day.' Four francs a-day! Vive la Charte! I could not believe it: 'twas the pay of an adjutant

sub-officer!!! I replied, 'That's the very thing for me, M. Murphy!' but you said then that I must not look so like a beggar, as that would frighten the employer to whom you would take me. I answered, 'I have not the means of dressing otherwise.' You said to me, 'Come to the Temple.' I followed you. I chose the most *spicy* attire that Mother Hubart had—you advanced me the money to pay her—and in a quarter

of an hour I was as smart as a landlord or a dentist. You appointed me to meet you this morning at the Porte Saint Denis, at daybreak: I found you there in a cab, and here we are."

"Well, do you find any thing to regret in all this?"

"Why, I'll tell you, M. Murphy. You see, to be dressed in this way spoils a fellow; and so, you see, when I put on again my old smockfrock and trousers I sha'n't like it. And then, to gain four francs a-day—I, who never earned but two—and that all at once! why, I seem to have made too great a start all of a sudden, and that it cannot last. I

would rather sleep all my life on the wretched straw bed in my cock-loft, than sleep five or six nights only in a good bed. That's my view of the thing."

"And you are by no means peculiar in your view: but the best thing is to sleep always in a good bed."

"And no mistake: it is better to have a bellyful of victuals every day than to starve with hunger. Ah! here is a butchery here," said the Chourineur, as he listened to the blows of the chopper which the boy was using, and observed the quarters of beef through the curtains.

"Yes, my lad; it belongs to a friend of mine. Would you like to see it whilst the horse just recovers his wind?"

"I really should, for it reminds me of my boyish days, if it was only when I had Montfaucon for a slaughter-house and broken-down horses for cattle. It is droll, but if I had the means a butcher's is the trade in which I should set up, for I like it. To go on a good nag to buy cattle at fairs—to return home to one's own fireside, to warm yourself if cold, or dry yourself if wet—to find your housekeeper, or a good, jolly, plump wife, cheerful and pleasant, with a parcel of children to feel in your pockets to see if you have brought them home any thing! And then, in the morning, in the slaughter-house, to seize an ox by the horns, particularly when he's fierce—*nom de nom!* he must be fierce!—then to put on the ring, to cleave him down, cut him up, dress him —— *Tonnerre!* that would have been my ambition, as it was the Goualeuse's to suck barley-sugar when she was a little 'un. By the way, that poor girl, M. Murphy—not seeing her any more at the ogress's, I supposed that M. Rodolph had taken her away from there. That's a good action, M. Murphy. Poor child! she never liked to do wrong—she was so young! And then the habit —— Ah, M. Rodolph has behaved quite right!"

"I am of your opinion. But will you come into the shop until our horse has rested awhile?"

The Chourineur and Murphy entered the shop, and then went to see the yard, where three splendid oxen and a score of sheep were fastened up; they then visited the stable, the chaise-house, the slaughter-house, the lofts, and the out-buildings of the house, which were all in excellent order, and kept with a cleanliness and care which bespoke regularity and easy circumstances.

When they had seen all but the up-stairs, Murphy said:

"You must own that my friend is a lucky fellow. This house and property are his, without counting a thousand crowns in hand to carry on his business with; and he is, besides, only thirty-eight, strong as a bull, with an iron constitution, and very fond of his business. The industrious and civil journeyman that you saw in the shop supplies his place, with much capability, when he goes to the fairs to purchase cattle. I say again, is he not a lucky fellow?"

"He is, indeed, M. Murphy. But, you see, there are lucky and unlucky people; and when I think that I am going to gain four francs a-day, and know how many there are who only earn the half, or even less ——"

"Will you come up and see the rest of the house?"

"With all my heart, M. Murphy."

"The person who is about to employ you is up-stairs."

"The person who is going to employ me?"

"Yes."

"Why, then, didn't you tell me that before?"

"I 'll tell you ——"

"One moment," said the Chourineur, with a downcast and embarrassed air, taking Murphy by the arm; "listen whilst I say a word to you, which perhaps M. Rodolph did not tell you, but which I ought not to conceal from the master who employs me, because, if he is offended by it — why then, you see — why, afterwards ——"

"What do you mean to say?"

"I mean to say ——"

"Well, what?"

"That I am a convict, who has served his time — that I have been at the Bagne," said the Chourineur, in a low voice.

"Indeed!" replied Murphy.

"But I never did wrong to any one," exclaimed the Chourineur; "and I would sooner die of hunger than rob: but I have done worse than rob," he added, bending his head down; "I have killed my fellow-creature in a passion. But that is not all," he continued, after a moment's pause. "I will tell every thing to my employer: I would rather he refused at first than detected afterwards. You know him, and if you think he would refuse me, why, spare me the refusal and I will go as I came."

"Come along with me," said Murphy.

The Chourineur followed Murphy up the staircase; a door opened, and they were both in the presence of Rodolph.

"My good Murphy," said he, "leave us together awhile."

CHAPTER XIX.

RECOMPENSE.

"VIVE LA CHARTE!" cried the Chourineur. "How precious glad I am to see you again, Mister Rodolph—or, rather, my lord!"

"Good day, my excellent friend! I am equally glad to see you."

"Oh, what a joker M. Murphy is!—he told me you had gone away. But stay, my lord ——"

"Call me M. Rodolph; I like that best."

"Well, then, M. Rodolph, I have to ask your pardon for not having been to see you after the night with the Schoolmaster. I see now that I was guilty of a great rudeness; but I do not suppose that you had any desire to see me?"

"I forgive you," said Rodolph, smiling; and then added, "Murphy has shewn you all over the house?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph; and a fine house and fine shop it is—all so neat and so comfortable! Talking of comfortable, I am the man that will be so, M. Rodolph! M. Murphy is going to put me in the way of earning four francs a-day—yes, four francs a-day!"

"I have something better than that to propose to you, my good fellow."

"Better! It 's unpolite to contradict you, but I think that would be difficult. Four francs a-day!"

"I tell you I have something better: for this house, all that it contains, the shop, and a thousand crowns which are in this pocket-book—all are yours."

The Chourineur smiled with a stupid air, flattened his long-napped

between his knees, and squeezed it convulsively, evidently not understanding what Rodolph said to him, although his language was plain enough.

Rodolph, with much kindness, said to him:

"I can imagine your surprise: but I again repeat, this house and this money are yours—they are your property."

The Chourineur became purple, passed his horny hand over his brow, which was bathed with perspiration, and stammered out, in a faltering voice:

"What!—eh!—that is—indeed—my property!"

"Yes, your property: for I bestow it all upon you. Do you understand? I give it to you."

The Chourineur rocked backwards and forwards on his chair, scratched his head, coughed, looked down on the ground, and made no reply. He felt that the thread of his ideas had escaped him. He heard quite well what Rodolph said to him, and that was the very reason he could not credit what he heard. Between the depth of misery, the degradation in which he had always existed, and the position in which Rodolph now placed him, there was an abyss so wide that the service he had rendered to Rodolph, important as it was, could not fill it up.

"Does what I give you, then, seem beyond your hopes?" inquired Rodolph.

"My lord," said the Chourineur, starting up suddenly, "you offer me this house and a great deal of money—to tempt me; but I cannot take them: I never robbed in my life. It is, perhaps, to kill: but I have too often dreamed of the serjeant," added he, in a hoarse tone.

"Oh, the unfortunate!" exclaimed Rodolph, with bitterness. "The

compassion evinced for them is so rare, that they can only explain liberality as a temptation to crime!"

Then addressing the Chourineur, in a voice full of gentleness:

"You judge me wrong—you mistake: I shall require from you nothing but what is honourable. What I give you, I give because you have deserved it."

"I!" said the Chourineur, whose embarrassments recommenced; "I deserve it! How?"

"I will tell you. Abandoned from your infancy—without any knowledge of right or wrong, left to your natural instinct—shut up for fifteen years in the Bagne with the most desperate villains—assailed by want and wretchedness—compelled by your own disgrace, and the opinion of honest men, to continue to haunt the low dens infested by the vilest malefactors—you have not only remained honest, but remorse for your crime has outlived the expiation which human justice had inflicted upon you."

This simple and noble language was a new source of astonishment for the Chourineur: he contemplated Rodolph with respect, mingled with fear and gratitude, but was still unable to convince himself that all he heard was reality.

"What, Monsieur Rodolph, because you beat me—because, thinking you a workman like myself—because you spoke 'slang' as if you had learned it from your cradle—I told you my history over two bottles of wine, and afterwards I saved you from being drowned—you give me a house—money—I shall be master! Say really, M. Rodolph, once more, is it possible?"

"Believing me like yourself, you told me your history naturally and without concealment, without withholding either what was culpable or generous. I have judged you, and judged you well, and I have resolved to recompense you."

"But, M. Rodolph, it ought not to be; there are poor labourers who have been honest all their lives, and who ——"

"I know it, and it may be I have done for many others more than I am doing for you; but if the man who lives honestly in the midst of honest men, encouraged by their esteem, deserves assistance and support, he who, in spite of the aversion of good men, remains honest amidst the most infamous associates on earth—he, too, deserves assistance and support. This is not all: you saved my life—you saved the life of Murphy, the dearest friend I have; and what I do for you is as much the dictate of personal gratitude as it is the desire to withdraw from pollution a good and generous nature, which has been perverted but not destroyed. And that is not all."

"What else have I done, M. Rodolph?"

Rodolph took his hand, and, shaking it heartily, said:

"Filled with commiseration for the mischief which had befallen the very man who had tried just before to kill you, you even gave him an asylum in your humble dwelling—No. 9, close to Notre Dame."

"You knew, then, where I lived, M. Rodolph?"

"If you forget the services you have done to me, I do not. When you left my house you were followed, and were seen to enter there with the Schoolmaster."

"But M. Murphy told me that you did not know where I lived, M. Rodolph."

"I was desirous of trying you still further: I wished to know if you had disinterestedness in your generosity, and I found that, after your courageous conduct, you returned to your hard daily labour, asking nothing, hoping for nothing, not even uttering a word of reproach for the apparent ingratitude with which I repaid your services; and when Murphy yesterday proposed to you employment a little more profitable than that of your habitual toil, you accepted it with joy, with gratitude."

"Why, M. Rodolph, do you see, sir, four francs a-day are always four francs a-day. As to the service I rendered you, why, it is rather I who ought to thank you."

"How so?"

"Yes, yes, M. Rodolph," he added, with a saddened air, "I do not forget that, since I knew you, it was you who said to me those two words —'*You have both* HEART *and* HONOUR!' It is astonishing how I have thought of that. They are only two little words, and yet those two words had that effect. But, in truth, sow two small grains of any thing in the soil, and they will put forth shoots."

This comparison, just and almost poetical as it was, struck Rodolph. In sooth, two words, but two magic words for the heart that understood them, had almost suddenly developed the generous instincts which were inherent in this energetic nature.

"You placed the Schoolmaster at St. Mandé?" said Rodolph.

"Yes, M. Rodolph. He made me change his notes for gold, and buy a belt, which I sewed round his body, and in which I put his *mopuses;* and then, good day! He boards for thirty sous a-day with good people, to whom that sum is of much service. When I have time to leave my wood-piles I shall go and see how he gets on."

"Your wood-piles! You forget your shop, and that you are here at home!"

"Come, M. Rodolph, do not amuse yourself by jesting with a poor devil like me: you have had your fun in *proving* me, as you term it. My house and my shop are songs to the same tune. You said to yourself, 'Let us see if this Chourineur is such a gulpin as to believe that I will make him such a present.' Enough, enough, M. Rodolph: you are a wag, and there 's an end of the matter."

And he laughed long, loud, and heartily.

"But, once more, believe ——"

"If I were to believe you, then you would say, 'Poor Chourineur! go! you are a trouble to me now.'"

Rodolph began to be really troubled how to convince the Chourineur, and said in a solemn, impressive, and almost severe tone:

"I never make sport of the gratitude and sympathy with which noble conduct inspires me. I have said this house and this establishment are yours, if they suit you, for the bargain is conditional. I swear to you, on my honour, all this belongs to you; and I make you a present of it, for the reasons I have already given."

The dignified and firm tone, and the serious expression of the features of Rodolph, at length convinced the Chourineur. For some moments

he looked at his protector in silence, and then said, in a voice of deep emotion,

"I believe you, my lord, and I thank you much. A poor man like me cannot make fine speeches, but once more, indeed, on my word, I thank you very much. All I can say is, that I will never refuse assistance to the unhappy; because Hunger and Misery are ogresses of the same sort as those who laid hands on the poor Goualeuse: and, once in that sink, it is not every one that has the fist strong enough to pull you out again."

"My worthy fellow, you cannot prove your gratitude more than in speaking to me thus."

"So much the better, my lord; for else I should have a hard job to prove it."

"Come, now, let us visit your house: my good old Murphy has had the pleasure, and I should like it also."

Rodolph and the Chourineur came down stairs. At the moment they reached the yard, the shopman, addressing the Chourineur, said to him, respectfully,

"Since you, sir, are to be my master, I beg to tell you that our custom is capital. We have no more cutlets or legs of mutton left, and we must kill a sheep or two directly."

"*Parbleu!*" said Rodolph to the Chourineur; "here is a capital opportunity for exercising your skill. I should like to have the first sample—the open air has given me an appetite, and I will taste your cutlets."

"You are very kind, M. Rodolph," said the Chourineur, in a cheerful voice: "you flatter me, but I will do my best."

"Shall I bring two sheep to the slaughter-house, master?" asked the journeyman.

"Yes; and bring a well-sharpened knife, not too thin in the blade and strong in the back."

"I have just what you want, master. There, you could shave with it. Take it——"

"*Tonnerre*, M. Rodolph!" said the Chourineur, taking off his upper coat with haste, and turning up his shirt-sleeves, which displayed a pair of arms like a prize-fighter's; "this reminds me of my boyish days and the slaughter-house. You shall see how I handle a knife! *Nom de nom!* I wish I was at it. The knife, lad! the knife! That's it; I see you know your trade. This is a blade! who will have it? *Tonnerre!* with a tool like this I could face a wild bull."

And the Chourineur brandished his knife—his eyes began to fill with blood; the beast was regaining the mastery: the instinct and thirst for blood reappeared in all the fulness of their fearful predominance.

The butchery was in the yard—a vaulted, dark place, paved with stones, and lighted by a small, narrow opening, at the top.

The man drove one of the sheep to the door.

"Shall I fasten him to the ring, master?"

"Fasten him! *tonnerre!* and I with my knees at liberty? Oh! no; I will hold him here as fast as if in a vice. Give me the beast, and go back to the shop."

The journeyman obeyed. Rodolph was left alone with the Chourineur, and watched him attentively, almost anxiously.

"Now, then, to work!" said he.

"Oh, I sha'n't be long. *Tonnerre!* you shall see how I handle a knife! My hands burn, and I have a singing in my ears; my temples beat, as they used when I was going to *see red.* Come here, thou —— Ah, *Madelon!* let me stab you dead!"

Then his eyes sparkled with a fierce delight, and, no longer conscious of the presence of Rodolph, the Chourineur lifted the sheep without an effort; with one spring he carried it off as a wolf would do, bounding towards his lair with his prey.

Rodolph followed him, and leaned on one of the wings of the door, which he closed. The butchery was dark: one strong ray of light falling straight down lighted up, *à la Rembrandt*, the rugged features of the

Chourineur, his light hair, and his red whiskers. Stooping low, holding in his teeth a long knife, which glittered in the "darkness visible," he drew the sheep between his legs, and, when he had adjusted it, took it by the head, stretched out its neck, and cut its throat.

At the instant when the sheep felt the keen blade it gave one gentle, low, and pitiful bleat, and, raising its dying eyes to the Chourineur, two spirts of blood jetted forth into the face of its slayer. The cry, the look, the blood that spouted out, made a fearful impression on the man. His knife fell from his hands; his features grew livid, contracted, and horrible, beneath the blood that covered them; his eyes expanded, his hair stiffened; and then retreating, with a gesture of horror he cried, in a suffocating voice, "Oh, the serjeant! the serjeant!"

Rodolph hastened to him: "Recover yourself, my good fellow!"

"There! there! the serjeant!" repeated the Chourineur, retreating step by step, with his eye fixed and haggard, and pointing with his finger as if at some invisible phantom. Then uttering a fearful cry, as if the spectre had touched him, he rushed to the bottom of the butchery, into the darkest corner; and there, with his face, breast, and arms against the wall, as if he would break through it to escape from so horrible a vision, he repeated, in a hollow and convulsive tone, "Oh, the serjeant! the serjeant! the serjeant!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEPARTURE.

THANKS to the care of Murphy and Rodolph, who with difficulty calmed his agitation, the Chourineur was completely restored to himself, and was alone with the prince in one of the rooms on the first floor in the house.

"My lord," said he, despondingly, "you have been very kind, indeed, to me; but, hear me: I would rather be a thousand times more wretched than I have yet been than become a butcher."

"Yet reflect a little."

"Why, my lord, when I heard the cry of the poor animal which could not make the slightest resistance; when I felt its blood spring into my face—hot blood, which seemed as coming from a living thing; you cannot imagine what I felt: then I had my dream all over again—the serjeant and those poor young fellows whom I cut and stabbed, who made no defence, and died giving me a look so gentle, so gentle that they seemed as if they pitied me! My lord, it would drive me mad!"

And the poor fellow hid his face in his hands with a convulsive start.

"Come, come, calm yourself."

"Excuse me, my lord; but just now the sight of the blood—of a knife—I could not bear: at every instant it would renew those dreams which I was beginning to forget. To have every day my hands and feet

in blood, to cut the throat of poor animals who do not so much as make a struggle — oh, no, no! I could not for the world. I would rather lose my eyesight at once, like the Schoolmaster, than be compelled to follow such a business."

It is impossible to depict the energetic gesture, action, and countenance of the Chourineur, as he thus expressed himself. Rodolph was deeply affected by it, and satisfied with the horrible effect which the sight of the blood had caused to his *protégé*.

For a moment the savage feeling, the bloodthirsty instinct, had overcome the human being in the Chourineur; but remorse eventually overwhelmed the instinct. That was as it should be, and it was a fine lesson.

"Forgive me, my lord," said the Chourineur, in a faltering voice; "I make but a bad recompense for all your kindness to me, but ——"

"Not at all, my good fellow: I told you that our bargain was conditional. I selected for you the business of a butcher, because your inclinations and taste seemed to lie in that direction ——"

"Alas! my lord, that's true; and, had it not been for what you know of, that would have been the trade of all others I should have chosen. I was only saying so to M. Murphy a little while since."

"As it was just possible that your taste did not lie that way, I have thought of another arrangement for you. A person who has a large tract of property at Algiers will give me up, for you, one of the extensive farms he holds in that country. The lands belonging to it are very fertile, and in full bearing; but I will not conceal from you, this estate is situated on the boundaries of the Atlas mountains — that is near the outposts, and exposed to the frequent attacks, of the Arabs, and one must be as much of a soldier as a husbandman: it is, at the same time, a redoubt and a farm. The man who occupies this dwelling in the absence of the proprietor will explain every thing to you: they say he is honest and faithful, and you may retain him there as long as you like. Once established there, you will not only increase your means by your labour and ability, but render a real service to your country by your courage. The colonists have formed a militia, and the extent of your property, the number of your tenants who will depend on you, will make you the chief of a very considerable troop. Headed by your courage, this band may be extremely useful in protecting the properties which are throughout the plain. I repeat to you, that this prospect for you would please me very much, in spite of, or, rather, in consequence of the danger; because you could at the same time display your natural intrepidity; and because, having thus expiated, and, as I may say, ransomed yourself from a great crime, your restitution to society would be more noble, more complete, more heroic, if it were worked out, in the midst of perils in an unconquered clime, than in the midst of the quiet inhabitants of a little town. If I did not first offer you this, it was because it was probable that the other would suit you, and the latter is so hazardous that I would not expose you to it without giving you the choice. There is still time, and, if this proposition for Algiers does not suit you, tell me so frankly, and we will look out for something else; if not, to-morrow every thing shall be signed, and you will start for Algiers with a person commissioned by the former proprietor of the farm to put you in full possession. Two years' rent will be due,

and paid to you on your arrival. The land yields three thousand francs a-year: work, improve it, be active, vigilant, and you will soon increase your comfort and the security of the colonists, whom you will aid and assist I am sure, for you will always be charitable and generous; and remember, too, to be rich implies that we should give much away. Although separated from you, I shall not lose sight of you, and never forget that I and my best friend owe our lives to you. The only proof of attachment and gratitude I ask is to learn to write and read as quickly as you can, that you may inform me regularly, once a-week, what you do, and to address yourself to me direct if you need any advice or assistance."

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It is useless to describe the extreme delight of the Chourineur. His disposition, his instincts, are already sufficiently known to the reader, so that he may understand that no proposal could have been made more acceptable to him.

* * * * * *

Next day all was arranged, and the Chourineur set out for Algiers.

CHAPTER XXI.

RESEARCHES.

The house which Rodolph had in the Allée des Veuves was not his usual place of residence; he lived in one of the largest mansions in the Faubourg St. Germain, situated at the end of the Rue Plumet and the Boulevard des Invalides.

To avoid the honours due to his sovereign rank, the prince had preserved his incognito since his arrival in Paris, his *chargé d'affaires* at the court of France having announced that his master would pay his official and indispensable visits under the name and title of the *Count de Duren*. Thanks to this usage (a very common one in the northern courts), a prince may travel with as much liberty as pleasure, and escape all the bore of ceremonious introductions. In spite of his slight incognito, Rodolph kept up in his mansion full state and etiquette. We will introduce the reader into the hôtel of the Rue Plumet, the day after the Chourineur had started for Algiers.

The clock had just struck ten, A.M. In the middle of a large *salon* on the ground-floor, and which formed the antechamber to Rodolph's business-chamber, Murphy was seated before a bureau, and sealing several despatches. A groom of the chambers, dressed in black and wearing a silver chain round his neck, opened the folding-doors and announced —

"His Excellency M. le Baron de Graün."

Murphy, without ceasing from his employment, received the baron with a nod at once cordial and familiar.

"Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires," said he, smiling, "will you warm yourself at the fire? I will be at your service in one moment."

"Monsieur the Private Secretary, I await your leisure," replied M. de Graün, gaily, and making, with mock respect, a low and respectful bow to the worthy squire.

The baron was about fifty years of age, with hair gray, thin, and lightly curled and powdered. His chin, rather projecting, was partly concealed in a high cravat of white muslin, starched very stiffly, and of unimpeachable whiteness. His countenance was expressive of great intelligence, and his carriage was *distinguée;* whilst beneath his gold spectacles there beamed an eye as shrewd as it was penetrating. Although it was only

ten o'clock in the morning, M. de Graün wore a black coat—that was etiquette; and a riband, shot with several bright colours, was suspended from his button-hole. He placed his hat on a chair and took his station near the fire-place, whilst Murphy continued his work.

"His royal highness, no doubt, was up the best part of the night, my dear Murphy, for your correspondence appears considerable?"

"Monseigneur went to bed at six o'clock this morning. He wrote, amongst other letters, one of eight pages to the Grand Marshal, and dictated to me one equally long to the Chief of the Upper Council, the Prince d'Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal, his royal highness's cousin."

"You know that his son, Prince Henry, has entered as lieutenant in the guards in the service of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria?"

"Yes: Monseigneur recommended him most warmly as his relation; and he really is a fine, excellent young man, handsome as an angel, and as good as gold."

"The fact is, my dear Murphy, that if the young Prince Henry had had his *entrée* to the grand ducal abbey of Ste. Hermenegilde, of which his aunt is the superior, the poor nuns ——"

"Baron! baron! why ——"

"My dear sir, the air of Paris —— But let us talk seriously. Shall I await the rising of his royal highness to communicate all the particulars which I have procured?"

"No, my dear baron. Monseigneur has desired that he should not be called before two or three o'clock in the afternoon: he desires, also, that you send off this morning these despatches by a special courier, instead of waiting till Monday. You will entrust me with all the particulars you have acquired, and I will communicate them to Monseigneur when he wakes. These are his orders."

"Nothing can be better, and I think his royal highness will be satisfied with what I have collected. But, my dear Murphy, I hope the despatch of the special courier is not a bad sign: the last despatches which I had the honour of sending to his royal highness ——"

"Announced that all was going on well at home; and it is precisely because my lord is desirous of expressing as early as possible his entire satisfaction, that he wishes a courier to be despatched this very day to Prince Herkhaüsen-Oldenzaal, chief of the Supreme Council."

"That is so like his royal highness: were it to blame instead of commend, he would observe less haste."

"Nothing new has transpired with us, my dear baron—nothing at all. Our mysterious adventures ——"

"Are wholly unknown. You know that, since the arrival of his royal highness in Paris, his friends have become used to see him but little in public: it is understood that he prefers seclusion, and is in the habit of making frequent excursions to the environs of Paris, and, with the exception of the Countess Sarah Macgregor and her brother, no person is aware of the disguises assumed by his royal highness; and neither of the personages I have mentioned have the smallest interest in betraying the secret."

"Ah! my dear baron," exclaimed Murphy, heaving a deep sigh, "what an unfortunate thing it is that this accursed countess should be left a widow at this very important moment!"

"She was married, I think, in 1827 or 1828?"

"In 1827, shortly after the death of the unfortunate child, who would now be in her sixteenth or seventeenth year, and whose loss his royal highness seems daily more to deplore."

"Far more so, indeed, than he appears to feel for the loss of his legitimate offspring."

"And thus, my dear baron, we may account for the deep interest his royal highness takes in the poor Goualeuse, arising as it does from the fact that the daughter so deeply deplored would, had she lived, have been precisely the same age as this unfortunate young creature."

"It is, indeed, an unfortunate affair that the Countess Sarah, from whom we fancied we were for ever freed, should have become a widow

exactly eighteen months after his royal highness had been deprived by death of the wife with whom he had passed years of wedded happiness. The countess, I am persuaded, looks upon this double freedom from all marriage-vows as a signal intervention of Providence to further her views."

"And her impetuous passion has become more ardent than ever, though she is well aware that my lord feels for her the deepest aversion and well-merited contempt. Was not her culpable indifference the cause of her child's death? Did she not cause —— Ah! baron," said Murphy, leaving the sentence unfinished, "this woman is our evil genius. God grant she may not reappear amongst us laden with fresh misfortunes!"

"But still, under present circumstances, any views Countess Sarah may entertain must be absurd in the greatest degree: the death of the unfortunate child you just now alluded to has broken the last tie which might have attached my lord to this dangerous woman. She must be mad, as well as foolish, to persist in so hopeless a pursuit."

"If she be mad, there is a dangerous 'method in her madness:' her brother, you are aware, partakes of her ambitious schemes and obstinate opinions of ultimate success. Although this worthy pair have as much reason for utter despair as they had eighteen years since of entire success ——"

"Eighteen years! What an accumulation of evil has been wrought during that period by the criminal compliance of that rascally Polidori!"

"By the way, talking of that miserable wretch, I have traced that he was here about a year or two ago, suffering, no doubt, from the most perfect destitution, or else subsisting by disgraceful and dishonourable practices."

"What a pity that a man so largely endowed with penetration, talent, deep learning, and natural intelligence, should sink so low!"

"The innate perversity of his character marred all these high qualities. It is to be hoped he and the countess will not meet: the junction of two such evil spirits is indeed to be feared, for what frightful consequences might there not result from it! Now, touching the facts you have been collecting, have you them about you?"

"Here," said the baron, drawing a paper from his pocket, "are the various particulars I have been enabled to collect touching the birth of a young girl known as La Goualeuse, and also of the now residence of an individual called François Germain, son of the Schoolmaster."

"Be kind enough to read me the result of your inquiries, my dear De Graün. I am well aware what are his royal highness's intentions in the matter; I shall be able to judge then whether the information you possess will be sufficient to enable him to carry them into effect. You have every reason to be satisfied with the agent you employ, I suppose?"

"Oh, he is a rare fellow! so precise, methodical, zealous, and intelligent! I am, indeed, sometimes obliged to moderate his energy; for I am well aware there are certain points, the clearing up of which his highness reserves for himself."

"And, of course, your agent is far from suspecting the deep interest his royal highness has in the matter?"

"Entirely so. My diplomatic position affords an excellent pretext for the inquiries I have undertaken. M. Badinot (for such is the name

of the person I am speaking of) is a sharp, shrewd individual, having connexions, either recognised or concealed, in every grade of society.

He was formerly a lawyer, but compelled to quit his profession from some very serious breach of trust; he has, however, retained very accurate recollections touching the fortunes and situations of his old clients; he knows many a secret, which he boasts, with considerable effrontery, of having turned to a good account. By turns, rich and poor—now successful, and then a ruined man—he only ceased his speculations when none could be found to take part in them with him; reduced to live from day to day by expedients more or less illegal, he became a curious specimen of the Figaro school—so long as his interest was concerned he would devote himself, soul and body, to his employer; and we are sure of his fidelity, for the simple reason that he has nothing to gain, though a great deal to lose, by deceiving us; and, besides, I make him careful of our interests, even unknown to himself."

"The particulars he has hitherto furnished us with have been very correct and satisfactory."

"Oh, he has a very straightforward manner of going to work! And I assure you, my dear Murphy, that M. Badinot is the very original type of one of those mysterious existences which are to be met with, and only

possible, in Paris. He would greatly amuse his royal highness, if it were not necessary to avoid their being known to each other in this business."

"You can augment the pay of M. Badinot if you deem it necessary."

"Why, really, five hundred francs a-month, and his expenses, amounting to nearly the same sum, appear to me quite sufficient: we shall see by and by."

"And does he not seem ashamed of the part he plays?"

"On the contrary—he is not a little vain of his employment, and when he brings me any particulars assumes a certain air of importance he would fain pass off as due to his diplomatic functions; for the fellow either thinks, or feigns to do so, that he is deeply engaged in state affairs, and ventures to observe at times, in a sort of under-tone, how very marvellous it is that such close and intimate relationship should be found to exist between every-day events and the destinies of kingdoms! Yes, really, he had the impudence to remark to me the other day, 'What complicated machinery is contained in the grand machine of state affairs! Who would think now, M. le Baron, those little humble notes collected by me will have their part to play in directing and regulating the affairs of Europe!'"

"Yes, yes, rascals generally seek to veil their mean and base practices beneath some high-sounding pretext. But the notes you are to give me, my dear baron, have you them with you?"

"Here they are, drawn up precisely from the accounts furnished by M. Badinot."

"Pray let me hear them: I am all attention."

M. de Graün then read as follows:—

"*Note relative to Fleur-de-Marie.*—About the beginning of the year 1827, a man named Pierre Tournemine, then under sentence in the galleys at Rochefort for forgery, proposed to a woman named Gervais,

but also known as La Chouette, to take perpetual charge of a little girl, then between five and six years of age, for a sum of one thousand francs paid down.

"The bargain being concluded, the child was delivered over to the woman, with whom she remained two years, when, unable longer to endure the cruelty shewn her, the little girl disappeared; nor did the Chouette hear any thing of her for several years, when she unexpectedly met with her at a small public-house in the Cité, nearly seven weeks ago. The infant, now grown into a young woman, then bore the appellation of La Goualeuse.

"A few days previously to this meeting, the above-mentioned Tournemine, who had become acquainted with the Schoolmaster at the galleys of Rochefort, had sent to Bras Rouge (the regular, though concealed correspondent, of every rogue and felon either in prison or out of it) a lengthened detail of every particular relative to the child formerly confided to the woman Gervais, otherwise the Chouette.

"From this account, and the declarations of the Chouette, it appeared that one Madame Séraphin, housekeeper to a notary named Jacques Ferrand, had in 1827 instructed Tournemine to find a person who, for the sum of one thousand francs, would be willing to take the entire charge of a child of from five to six years of age whom it was desired to get rid of, as has before been mentioned.

"That the Chouette accepted the proposition, and received both the child and the stipulated sum of money.

"The aim of Tournemine, in addressing these particulars to Bras Rouge, was to enable the latter to extort money from Madame Séraphin, who Tournemine considered but as the agent of a third party, under a threat of revealing the whole affair unless well paid for silence.

"Bras Rouge entrusted the Chouette, long the established partner in all the Schoolmaster's schemes of villany; and this explains how so important a document found its way to that monster's possession, and also accounts for the expression used by the Chouette at her rencontre with the Goualeuse in the cabaret of the White Rabbit, when, by way of tormenting her victim, she said, 'We have found out all about your parents, but you shall never know who or what they are.'

"The point to be decided was as to the veracity of the circumstances detailed by Tournemine in his letter to the Chouette.

"It has been ascertained that Madame Séraphin and the notary, Jacques Ferrand, are both living: the address of the latter is Rue du Sentier, No. 41, where he passes for a person of pious and austere life; at least, he is constant in his attendance at church—his attention to his professional duties, close and severe, though some accuse him of following up the severity of the law with unnecessary rigour. In his mode of living he observes a parsimony bordering on avarice. Madame Séraphin still resides with him, as manager of his household; and M. Jacques Ferrand, spite of his original poverty, has invested thirty-five thousand francs in the funds: the greatest part of this sum having been supplied to him through a M. Charles Robert, a superior officer of the National Guard —a young and handsome man, in high repute with a certain class of society. 'Tis true that some ill-natured persons are found to assert that, owing either to fortunate speculations or lucky hits upon the Stock Exchange, undertaken in partnership with the above-mentioned Charles Robert, the worthy notary could now well afford to pay back the original loan with high interest; but the rigidly austere and self-denying life of

this worthy man gives a flat denial to all such gossiping reports, and, spite of the incredulity with which he is occasionally listened to, he persists in styling himself a man struggling for a maintenance. There can be no manner of doubt but that Madame Séraphin, this worthy gentleman's housekeeper, could, if she pleased, throw an entire light upon every circumstance connected with La Goualeuse."

"Bravo! my dear baron," exclaimed Murphy: "nothing can be better. These declarations of Tournemine carry with them an appearance of truth, and it seems more than probable that we may, through Jacques Ferrand, obtain the right clue to discovering the parents of this unfortunate girl. Now tell me, have you been equally successful in the information collected touching the son of the Schoolmaster?"

"Perhaps, as regards him, I am not furnished with such minute particulars; but, upon the whole, I think the result of our inquiries very satisfactory."

"Upon my word, your M. Badinot, is a downright treasure!"

"You see, Bras Rouge is the hinge upon which every thing turns. M. Badinot, who has several acquaintances in the police, pointed him out to us as the go-between of several notorious felons, and knew the man directly he was set to discover what had become of the ill-fated son of Madame Georges Duresnel, the unfortunate wife of this atrocious Schoolmaster."

"And it was in going to search for Bras Rouge, in his den in the Cité (Rue aux Fêves, No. 13), that my lord fell in with the Chourineur and La Goualeuse. His royal highness hoped, too, that the opportunity now before him, of visiting these abodes of vice and wretchedness, might afford him the means of rescuing some unfortunate being from the depths of guilt and misery. His benevolent anticipations were gratified, but at what risk it is painful even to remember."

"Whatever dangers attended the scheme, you, at least, my dear Murphy, bravely bore your share in them."

"Was not I, for that very purpose, appointed *charcoal-man* in waiting upon his royal highness?" replied the squire, smilingly.

"Say, rather, his intrepid body-guard, my worthy friend. But to touch upon your courage and devotion is only to repeat what every one knows. I will, therefore, spare your modesty, and continue my relation. Here are the various particulars we have been able to glean concerning François Germain, son of Madame Georges and the Schoolmaster, properly called Duresnel:—

"About eighteen months since a young man, named François Germain, arrived in Paris from Nantes, where he had been employed in the banking-house of Noël and Co.

"It seems, both from the confession of the Schoolmaster as well as from several letters found upon him, that the scoundrel to whom he had entrusted his unfortunate offspring, for the purpose of perverting his young mind, and rendering him one day a worthy assistant to his unprincipled father in his nefarious schemes, proposed to the young man to join in a plot for robbing his employers, as well as to forge upon the firm to a considerable amount. This proposition was received by the youth with well-merited indignation, but, unwilling to denounce the man by whom he had been brought up, he first communicated anonymously to his

master the designs projected against the bank, and then privately quitted Nantes, that he might avoid the rage and fury of those whose sinful practices his soul sickened and shuddered to think of, far less to bear the idea of participating in.

"These wretches, aware that they had betrayed themselves to the young man, and dreading the use he might make of his information, immediately upon finding he had quitted Nantes followed him to Paris, with the most sinister intentions of silencing him for ever. After long and persevering inquiries they succeeded in discovering his address, but, happily for the persecuted object of their search, he had a few days previously encountered the villain who had first sought to corrupt his principles, and, well divining the motive which had brought him to Paris, lost no time in changing his abode; and so, for this time, the Schoolmaster's hapless son escaped his pursuers. Still, however, following up the scent, they succeeded in tracing the youth to his fresh abode, 17 Rue du Temple. One evening, however, he narrowly escaped falling into an ambush laid for him—(the Schoolmaster concealed this circumstance from my lord)—

but again Providence befriended him, and he escaped, though too much alarmed to remain in his lodgings: he once more changed his abode, since which time all traces of him have been lost. And matters had reached thus far when the Schoolmaster received the just punishment of his crimes; since which period, by order of my lord, fresh inquiries have been instituted, of which the following is the result.

"François Germain lived for about three months at No 17 Rue du Temple, a house rendered worthy of observation by the habits and ingenious practices of its inhabitants. Germain was a great favourite among them, by reason of his kind and amiable disposition, as well as for the frank gaiety of his temper. Although his means of livelihood appeared

very slender, yet he had rendered the most generous assistance to an indigent family occupying the garrets of the house. In vain has been every inquiry made in the Rue du Temple touching the present residence of François Germain, or the profession he was supposed to follow: every one in the house believed him to be employed in some counting-house, or office, as he went out early in the morning and never returned till late in the evening. The only person who really knows the present residence of the young man is a female, lodging in the house No. 17 Rue du Temple —a young and pretty grisette, named Rigolette, between whom and Germain a very close acquaintance appears to have existed. She occupies the adjoining room to that which Germain tenanted, and which chamber, by the by, is still vacant; and it was under pretext of inquiring about it that these particulars were obtained."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Murphy, after having been for several minutes apparently in deep thought. "Yes, I am sure I know her."

"*You!* Sir Walter Murphy," replied the baron, much amused. "You! most worthy and respectable father of a family! *you* know any thing of pretty grisettes! And so the name of Mademoiselle Rigolette is familiar to you, is it? Fie! fie! Oh, positively I am ashamed of you!"

"'Pon my soul, my lord compelled me to have so many strange acquaintances, that such a mere trifle as this should pass for nothing. But wait a bit. Yes, now I recollect perfectly, that when my lord was relating the history of La Goualeuse, I could not help laughing at the very odd name of Rigolette, which, as far as I can call to mind, was the name of a prison acquaintance of that poor Fleur-de-Marie."

"Well, then, just at this particular juncture Mademoiselle Rigolette may be of the utmost service to us. Let me conclude my report:—

"There might possibly be an advantage in engaging the vacant chamber recently belonging to Germain, in the Rue du Temple. We have no instructions to proceed further in our investigations, but, from some words which escaped the porteress, there is every reason to believe that not only would it be possible to find in this house certain indications of where the Schoolmaster's son may be heard of, through the means of Mademoiselle Rigolette, but the house itself would afford my lord an opportunity of studying human nature amid wants, difficulties, and misery, the very existence of which he is far from suspecting."

"Thus you see, my dear Murphy," said M. de Graün, finishing his report and presenting it to his companion—"you see evidently that it is from the notary, Jacques Ferrand, we must hope to obtain information respecting the parentage of La Goualeuse, and that we must go to Mademoiselle Rigolette to trace the dwelling of François Germain. It seems to me a great point to have ascertained the direction in which to search."

"Undoubtedly, baron; you are quite right: and, besides, I am sure my lord will find a fine field for observation in the house of which you speak. But I have not yet done with you. Have you made any inquiries respecting the Marquis d'Harville?"

"I have; and, so far as concerns money matters, his royal highness's fears are wholly unfounded. M. Badinot affirms (and he is very likely to be well informed on the subject) that the fortune of the marquis has never been in a more prosperous condition, or better managed."

"Why, after having in vain exhausted every other conjecture as to the secret grief which is preying upon M. d'Harville, my lord imagined that it was just probable the marquis had some pecuniary difficulties: had it proved so, he would have removed them with that delicate assumption of mystery you know he so frequently employs to veil his munificence. But, since even this conjecture has failed, he must abandon all hope of guessing the enigma; and this he will do the more reluctantly, as his great desire to discover it arose out of his ardent friendship for M. d'Harville."

"A friendship which is founded on a grateful recollection of the important services rendered by the marquis's father to his own parent. Are you aware, my dear Murphy, that at the remodelling of the States in 1815, at the Germanic confederation, the father of his royal highness had a chance of being excluded, from his well-known attachment to Napoleon? Thanks to the friendship with which the Emperor Alexander honoured him, the deceased Marquis d'Harville was enabled to render most effectual service to the father of our patron. The emperor, whose warm regard for the late marquis had taken its date from the period of that nobleman's emigration to Russia, exerted his powerful influence in congress so successfully, that at the grand meeting to decide the destinies of the princes of Germany, the father of our noble employer was reinstated in all his pristine rights. As for the friendship now subsisting between the present marquis and his royal highness, I believe it commenced when, as mere boys, they met together on a visit paid by the then reigning Grand Duke to the late Marquis d'Harville."

"So I have heard; and they appear to have retained a most lively recollection of this happy period of their youth. Nor is this all I have to

say on the subject of the interest our noble master takes in every matter concerning the house of D'Harville. So profound is his gratitude for the services rendered to his father, that all bearing the honoured name of D'Harville, or belonging to the family, possess a powerful claim on the kindness of the prince. Thus, not alone to her virtues or her misfortunes, does poor Madame Georges owe the increasing and unwearied goodness of my lord."

"Madame Georges!" exclaimed the astounded baron. "What, the wife of Duresnel, the felon known as the Schoolmaster?"

"And the mother of François Germain, the youth we are seeking for, and whom, I trust, we shall find."

"Is the relation of M. d'Harville?"

"She was his mother's cousin, and her most intimate friend: the old marquis entertained the most perfect friendship and esteem for Madame Georges."

"But how, for Heaven's sake, my dear Murphy, did it ever come about that the D'Harville family ever permitted a descendant of theirs to marry such a monster as this Duresnel?"

"Why, thus it was. The father of this unfortunate woman was a M. de Lagny, who, previous to the Revolution, possessed considerable property in Languedoc, and who, having fortunately escaped the proscription so fatal to many, availed himself of the first tranquillity which succeeded these days of discord and anarchy to establish his only daughter in marriage. Among the various candidates for the hand of the young heiress was this Duresnel, the representative of a wealthy and respectable family, possessing powerful parliamentary influence, and concealing the depravity of his disposition beneath the most specious exterior. To this man was Mademoiselle de Lagny united, by desire of her father: but a very short time sufficed to strip the mask from his vicious character, and to display his natural propensities. A gambler, spendthrift, and profligate, addicted to the lowest vices that can disgrace a human being, he quickly dissipated, not only his own fortune, but that of his wife also. Even the estate to which Madame Georges Duresnel had retired was involved in the general ruin occasioned by her worthless husband's passion for play, and his dissolute mode of life; and the unfortunate woman would have been left without a shelter for herself or infant son but for the kind affection of her relation, the Marquise d'Harville, whom she loved with the tenderness of a sister. With this valued friend Madame Duresnel found a welcome home, while her wretched husband, finding himself utterly ruined, plunged into the blackest crimes, and stopped at no means, however guilty and desperate, to supply his pleasures. He became the associate of thieves, murderers, pickpockets, and forgers, and ere long, falling into the hands of the law, was sentenced to the galleys for the term of his natural life. Yet, while suffering the just punishment of his crimes, his base mind devised the double atrocity of tearing the child from its miserable mother, for the sake of breaking down every good principle it might have imbibed, and of training it up in vicious readiness to join his future schemes of villany. You know the rest. After the condemnation of her husband, Madame Georges, without giving any reason for so doing, quitted the Marquise d'Harville, and went to hide her shame and her sorrows in Paris, where she soon fell into the

utmost distress. It would occupy too much time to tell you by what train of events my lord became aware of the misfortunes of this excellent woman, as well as the ties which connect her with the D'Harville family: it is sufficient that he came most opportunely and generously to her assistance, induced her to quit Paris and establish herself at the farm at Bouqueval, where she now is, with the Goualeuse. In this peaceful retreat she has found tranquillity, if not happiness; and the overlooking and management of the farm may serve to recreate her thoughts, and prevent them from dwelling too deeply on her past sorrows. As much to spare the almost morbid sensibility of Madame Georges, as because he dislikes to blazon forth his good deeds, my lord has not even acquainted M. d'Harville with the fact of his having relieved his kinswoman from such severe distress."

"I comprehend now the twofold interest which my lord has in desiring to discover the traces of the son of this poor woman."

"You may also judge by that, my dear baron, of the affection which his royal highness bears to the whole family, and how deep is his vexation at seeing the young marquis so sad, with so many reasons to be happy."

"What can there be wanting to M. d'Harville? He unites all—birth, fortune, wit, youth; his wife is charming, and as prudent as she is lovely."

"True, and his royal highness only had recourse to the inquiries we have been talking over after having in vain endeavoured to penetrate the cause of M. d'Harville's deep melancholy: he shewed himself deeply affected by the kind attentions of Monseigneur, but still has been entirely reserved on the subject of his low spirits. It may be some *peine de cœur*."

"Yet it is said that he is excessively fond of his wife, and she does not give him the least cause for jealousy. I often meet her in society, and, although she is constantly surrounded by admirers (as every young and lovely woman is), still her reputation is unsullied."

"The marquis is always speaking of her in the highest terms: he has had, however, one little discussion with her on the subject of the Countess Sarah Macgregor."

"Has she, then, seen her?"

"By a most unlucky chance, the father of the Marquis d'Harville knew Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, and her brother Tom, seventeen or eighteen years ago, during their residence in Paris, and when they were much noticed by the lady of the English ambassador. Learning that the brother and sister were going into Germany, the old marquis gave them letters of introduction to the father of our noble lord, with whom he kept up a constant correspondence. Alas! my dear De Graün, perhaps but for these introductions many misfortunes would have been avoided, for then Monseigneur would not have known this woman. When the Countess Sarah returned hither, knowing the friendship of his royal highness for the marquis, she presented herself at the Hôtel d'Harville, in the hope of meeting Monseigneur; for she shews as much pertinacity in pursuing him as he evinces resolution to avoid her."

"Only imagine her disguising herself in male attire, and following him into the Cité! No woman but she would have dreamt of such a thing."

" She, perhaps, hoped by such a step to touch his royal highness, and compel him to an interview, which he has always refused and avoided. To return to Madame d'Harville: her husband, to whom Monseigneur has spoken of Sarah as she deserved, has begged his wife to see her as seldom as possible; but the young marchioness, seduced by the hypocritical flatteries of the countess, has gone somewhat counter to the marquis's request. Some trifling differences have arisen, but not of sufficient importance to cause or explain the extreme dejection of the marquis."

" Oh, the women! the women! My dear Murphy, I am very sorry that Madame d'Harville should have formed any acquaintance with this

Sarah. So young and charming a woman must suffer by the contact with such an infernal ——"

" Talking of infernal creatures," said Murphy, " here is a communication relative to Cecily, the unworthy spouse of the excellent David."

"Between ourselves, my dear Murphy, this audacious *métisse** well deserves the terrible punishment that her husband, our dear black doctor, has inflicted on the Schoolmaster by Monseigneur's order. She has also shed blood, and her unblushing infamy is astounding."

"Yet she is so very handsome—so seductive! A perverted mind within an attractive outside always inspires me with twofold disgust."

"In this sense Cecily is doubly hateful. But I hope that this despatch annuls the last orders issued by Monseigneur with regard to this wretched creature."

"On the contrary, baron."

"My lord, then, desires that her escape from the fortress in which she had been shut up for life may be effected?"

"Yes."

"And that her pretended ravisher should bring her to France—to Paris?"

"Yes; and, besides, this despatch orders the arrangement to be carried out as soon as possible, and that Cecily be made to travel hither so speedily that she may arrive here in a fortnight."

"I am lost in astonishment! Monseigneur has always evinced such a horror of her!"

"And that horror he still experiences; if possible, stronger than ever."

"And yet he causes her to be sent to him! To be sure, it will always be easy to apprehend Cecily again, if she does not carry out what he requires of her. Orders are given to the son of the gaoler of the fortress of Geralstein to carry her off, as if he were enamoured of her, and every facility will be given to him for effecting this purpose. Overjoyed at this opportunity of escaping, the *métisse* will follow her supposed ravisher, and reach Paris; then she will always have her sentence of condemnation hanging over her—always be but an escaped prisoner, and I shall be always ready, when it shall please his royal highness to desire, again to lay hands upon and incarcerate her."

"I should tell you, my dear baron, that when David learned from Monseigneur of the proposed arrival of Cecily, he was absolutely petrified, and exclaimed, 'I hope that your royal highness will not compel me to see the monster?' 'Make yourself easy,' replied Monseigneur; 'you shall not see her, but I may require her services for a particular purpose.' David felt relieved of an enormous weight off his mind. Nevertheless, I am sure that some very painful reminiscences were awakened in his mind."

"Poor Negro! he loves her still. They say, too, that she is yet so lovely!"

"Charming!—too charming! It requires the pitiless eye of a Creole to detect the *mixed blood* in the all but imperceptible shade which lightly tinges her rosy finger nails. Our fresh and hale beauties of the north have not a more transparent complexion, nor a skin of more dazzling whiteness."

"I was in France when Monseigneur returned from America, accom-

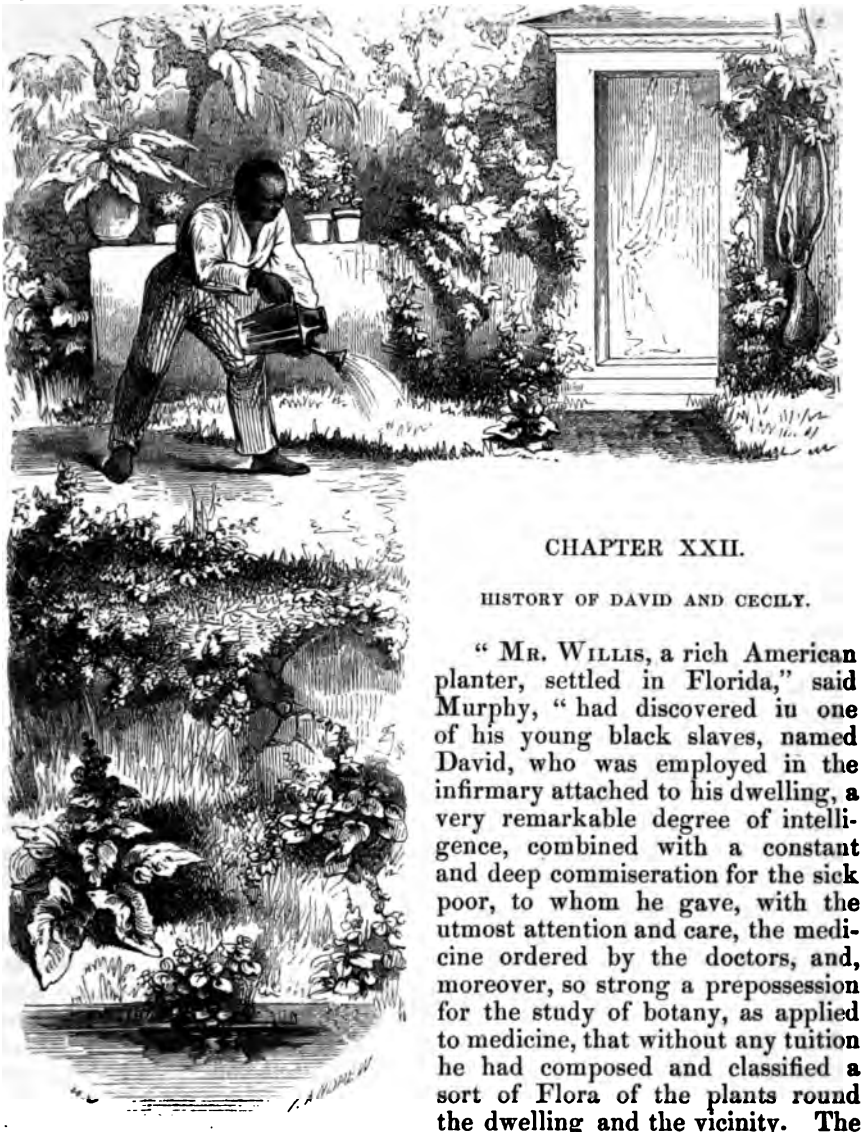
* The Creole issue of a white and Quadroon slave. The *métisses* only differ from the white by some peculiarities hardly perceptible.

panied by David and Cecily, and I know that that excellent man was from that time attached to his royal highness by ties of the strongest gratitude; but I never learned how he became attached to the service of our master, and how he had married Cecily, whom I saw, for the first time, about a year after his marriage; and God knows the scandal that followed!"

"I can tell you every particular that you may wish to learn, my dear baron: I accompanied Monseigneur in his voyage to America, when he rescued David and the *métisse* from the most awful fate."

"You are always most kind, my dear Murphy, and I am all attention," said the baron.

Cecily.



CHAPTER XXII.

HISTORY OF DAVID AND CECILY.

"Mr. Willis, a rich American planter, settled in Florida," said Murphy, "had discovered in one of his young black slaves, named David, who was employed in the infirmary attached to his dwelling, a very remarkable degree of intelligence, combined with a constant and deep commiseration for the sick poor, to whom he gave, with the utmost attention and care, the medicine ordered by the doctors, and, moreover, so strong a prepossession for the study of botany, as applied to medicine, that without any tuition he had composed and classified a sort of Flora of the plants round the dwelling and the vicinity. The establishment of Mr. Willis, situated on the borders of the sea, was fifteen or twenty leagues from the nearest town; and the medical men of the district, ignorant as they were, gave themselves no great deal of care or trouble, in consequence of the long distance and the difficulty in procuring any means of conveyance. Desirous of remedying so extreme an inconvenience in a country subject to violent epidemics, and to have at hand at all times a skilful practitioner, the colonist made up his mind to send David to France to learn surgery and medicine. Enchanted at this offer, the young black set out for Paris, and the planter payed all the expenses of his course of study. David, having for eight years studied with great diligence and remarkable effect, received the

degree of surgeon and physician with most distinguished success, and then returned to America to place himself and his skill under the direction of his master."

"But David ought to have considered himself free and emancipated, in fact and in law, when he set foot in France."

"David's loyalty is very rare: he had promised Mr. Willis to return, and he did so. He did not consider as his own the instruction which he had acquired with his master's money; and, besides, he hoped to improve morally as well as physically the sufferings of the slaves, his former companions; he trusted to become not only their doctor, but their firm friend and defender with the colonist."

"He must, indeed, be imbued with the most unflinching probity and the most intense love for his fellow-creatures to return to a master—an owner, after having spent eight years in the midst of the society of the most democratic young men in Europe."

"Judge of the man by this one trait. Well, he returned to Florida, and, truth to tell, was used by Mr. Willis with consideration and kindness, eating at his table, sleeping under his roof. But this colonist was as stupid, malevolent, selfish, and despotic, as most Creoles are, and he thought himself very generous in giving David six hundred francs (24*l.*) a-year salary. At the end of some months a terrible typhus fever broke out in the plantation: Mr. Willis was attacked by it, but soon restored through the careful attentions and efficacious remedies of David. Out of thirty Negroes dangerously affected by this fatal disease only two perished; Mr. Willis, much gratified by the services which David had so auspiciously rendered, raised his wages to twelve hundred francs, to the extreme gratification of the black doctor, whose fellows regarded him as a divinity amongst them, for he had, with much difficulty it is true, obtained from their master some few indulgences, and was hoping to procure still more. In the meanwhile, he consoled these poor people, and exhorted them to patience; spake to them of God, who watches over the black and the white man with an equal eye; of another world not peopled with masters and slaves, but with the just and the unjust; of another life in eternity, where man was no longer the beast of burden—the property—the thing of his fellow-man, but where the victims of this world were so happy that they prayed in heaven for their tormentors. What shall I tell you more? To those unhappy wretches who, contrary to other men, count with bitter joy the hours which bring them nearer to the tomb—to those unfortunate creatures who looked forward only to nothingness hereafter, David breathed the language and the hope of a free and happy immortality; and then their chains appeared less heavy and their toil less irksome. He was their idol. A year passed away in this manner. Amongst the handsomest of the female slaves at the house was a *métisse*, about fifteen years of age, named Cecily, and for this girl Mr. Willis took a fancy. For the first time in his life his advances were repulsed and obstinately resisted; Cecily was in love, and with David, who, during the late fearful distemper, had attended her with the most vigilant care. Afterwards a deep and mutual love repaid him the debt of gratitude. David's taste was too refined to allow him to boast of his happiness before the time when he should

marry Cecily, which was to be when she had turned her sixteenth year. Mr. Willis, ignorant of their love, had thrown his handkerchief right royally

at the pretty *métisse*, and she, in deep despair, sought David, and told him all the brutal attempts that she had been subjected to and with difficulty escaped. The black comforted her, and instantly went to Mr. Willis to request her hand in marriage."

"*Diable!* my dear Murphy, I can easily surmise the answer of the American sultan—he refused?"

"He did. He said he had an inclination for the girl himself; that in his life before he had never experienced the repulse of a slave; he meant to possess her, and he would. David might choose another wife or mistress, whichsoever might best suit his inclination; there were in the plantation ten *capusses* or *métisses* as pretty as Cecily. David talked of his love—love so long and tenderly shared, and the planter shrugged his shoulders; David urged, but it was all in vain. The Creole had the cool impudence to tell him that it was a bad example to see a master concede to a slave, and that he would not set that 'example' to satisfy a caprice of David's! He entreated—supplicated, and his master lost his temper. David, blushing to humiliate himself further, spake in a firm tone of his services and his disinterestedness—that he had been contented with a very slender salary. Mr. Willis was desperately enraged, and, telling him he was a contumacious slave, threatened him with the chain. David replied with a few bitter and violent words; and, two hours afterwards, bound to a stake, his skin was torn with the lash, whilst they bore Cecily to the harem of the planter in his sight."

"The conduct of the planter was brutal and horrible; it was adding

absurdity to cruelty, for he must after that have required the man's services."

" Precisely so; for that very day the very fury into which he had worked himself, joined to the drunkenness in which the brute indulged every evening, brought on an inflammatory attack of the most dangerous description, the symptoms of which appeared with the rapidity peculiar to such affections. The planter was carried to his bed in a state of the highest fever. He sent off an express for a doctor, but he could not reach his abode in less than six-and-thirty hours."

" Really this attack seems providential. The desperate condition of the man was quite deserved by him."

" The malady made fearful strides. David only could save the colonist, but Willis, distrustful, as all evil-doers are, imagined that the black would revenge himself by administering poison; for, after having scourged him with a rod, he had thrown him into prison. At last, horrified at the progress of his illness, broken down by bodily anguish, and thinking that, as death also stared him in the face, he had one chance left in trusting to the generosity of his slave, after many distrusting doubts, Willis ordered David to be unchained."

" And David saved the planter?"

" For five days and five nights he watched and tended him as if he had been his father, counteracting the disease, step by step, with great skill and perfect knowledge, until, at last, he succeeded in defeating it, to the extreme surprise of the doctor who had been sent for, and who did not arrive until the second day."

" And, when restored to health at last, the colonist——"

" Not desiring to blush before his own slave, whose presence constantly oppressed him with the recollection of his excessive nobleness of conduct, the colonist made an enormous sacrifice to attach the doctor he had sent for to his establishment, and David was again conducted to his dungeon."

"Horrible! but by no means astonishing. David must have been in the eyes of his brutal master a complete living remorse."

"Such conduct was dictated alike by revenge and jealousy. The blacks of Mr. Willis loved David with all the warmth of gratitude, for he had saved them body and soul. They knew the care he had bestowed on him when he lay tossing with fever between life and death, and, shaking off the deadening apathy which ordinarily besets slavery, these unfortunate creatures evinced their indignation, or rather grief, most powerfully when they saw David lacerated by the whip. Mr. Willis, deeply exasperated, affected to discover in this manifestation the appearance of revolt, and, when he considered the influence which David had acquired over the slaves, he believed him capable of placing himself at the head of a rebellion to avenge himself of his wrongs. This fear was another motive with the colonist for using David in the most shameful manner, and entirely preventing him from effecting the malicious designs of which he suspected him."

"Considering him as actuated by an irrepressible amount of terror, this conduct seems less stupid, but quite as ferocious."

"A short time after these events we arrived in America. Monseigneur had freighted a Danish brig at St. Thomas's, and we visited incognito all the settlements of the American coast along which we were sailing. We were most hospitably received by Mr. Willis, who, the evening after our arrival, after he had been drinking, and as much from the excitement of wine as from a desire to boast, told us, in a horrid tone of brutal jesting, the history of David and Cecily. I forgot to say that, after having maltreated the girl, he had thrown her into a dungeon also, as a punishment for her disdain of him. His royal highness, on hearing Willis's fearful narration, thought the man was either drunk or a liar; but he was drunk—it was no lie. To remove any and all doubt, the colonist rose from the table, and desiring a slave to bear a lantern and conduct us to David's cell."

"Well, what followed?"

"In my life I never saw so distressing a spectacle. Pale, wan, meagre, half-naked, and covered with wounds, David and the unhappy girl, chained by the middle of the body, one at one end and the other at the other end of the dungeon, looked like spectres. The lantern that lighted us threw over this scene a still more ghastly hue. David did not utter a word when he saw us; his gaze was fixed and fearful. The colonist said to him, with cruel irony, 'Well, doctor, how goes it? You, who are so clever, why don't you cure yourself?' The black replied by a noble word and a dignified gesture; he raised his right hand slowly, his fore-finger pointed to the roof, and, without looking at the colonist, said in a solemn tone, 'GOD!' and then was silent. '*God?*' replied the planter, bursting into a loud fit of laughter, 'tell him then—tell God to come and snatch you from my power! I defy him!' Then Willis, overcome by fury and intoxication, shook his fist to heaven, and said, in blasphemous language, 'Yes, I defy God to carry off my slaves before they are dead!'

"The man was mad as well as brutal."

"We were utterly disgusted: Monseigneur did not say a word, and

we left the cell. This dungeon was situated, as well as the house, on the seashore. We returned to our brig, which was moored a short distance off, and at one o'clock in the morning, when all in the building were plunged in profound sleep, Monseigneur went on shore with eight men well armed, and, going straight to the prison, burst open the doors, and freed David and Cecily. The two victims were carried on board so quietly that they were not perceived; and then Monseigneur and I went to the planter's house. Strange contrast! these men torture their slaves, and yet do not take any precaution against them, but sleep with doors and windows open. We easily got access to the sleeping-room of the planter, which was lighted on the inside by a small glass-lamp; Monseigneur awakened the man, who sat upright in his bed, his brain still disturbed by the effect of his drunkenness. 'You have to-night defied God to carry off your two victims before their death, and *He has taken them*,' said Monseigneur. Then taking a bag which I carried, and which contained twenty-five thousand francs in gold, he threw it on the fellow's bed, and added, 'This will indemnify you for the loss of your two slaves—to your violence that destroys I oppose a violence that saves. God will judge between us.' We then retreated, leaving Mr. Willis stupified, motionless, and believing himself under the influence

of a dream. A few minutes later and we were again on board the brig, which instantly set sail."

"It appears to me, my dear Murphy, that his royal highness overpaid this wretch for the loss of his slaves; for, in fact, David no longer belonged to him."

"We calculated, as nearly as we could, the expense which his studies had cost for eight years, and then the price, thrice over, of himself and Cecily as slaves. Our conduct was contrary to the rights of property, I know; but if you had seen in what a horrible state we found these unfortunate and half-dead couple—if you had heard the sacrilegious defiance almost cast in the face of the Almighty by this man, drunk with wine and ferocity, you would comprehend how Monseigneur desired, as he said, on this occasion, *to act as it were in behalf of Providence.*"

"All this is as assailable and as justifiable as the punishment of the Schoolmaster, my worthy squire. And had not this adventure any consequences?"

"It could not. The brig was under Danish colours—the incognito of his royal highness was closely kept—we were taken for rich Englishmen. To whom could Willis have addressed his complaints, if he had any to make? In fact, he had told us himself, and the medical man of Monseigneur declared it in a *procès verbal*, that the two slaves could not have lived eight days longer in this frightful dungeon. It required the greatest possible care to snatch David and Cecily from almost certain death. At last they were restored to life. From this period David has been attached to the suite of Monseigneur as a medical man, and is most devotedly attached to him."

"David married Cecily, of course, on arriving in Europe?"

"This marriage, which ought to have been followed by results so happy, took place in the chapel of the palace of Monseigneur; but, by a most extraordinary revulsion of conduct, hardly was she in the full enjoyment of an unhoped-for position, when, forgetting all that David had suffered for her and what she had suffered for him, blushing in the new world to be wedded to a black, Cecily, seduced by a man of most depraved morals, committed her first fault. It would seem as though the natural perversity of this abandoned woman, having till then slumbered, was suddenly awakened, and developed itself with fearful energy. You know the rest, and all the scandal of the adventures that followed. After having been two years a wife, David, whose confidence in her was only equalled by his love, learned the full extent of her infamy—a thunderbolt aroused him from his blind security."

"They say he tried to kill his wife."

"Yes; but, through the interference of Monseigneur, he consented to allow her to be immured for life in a prison, and it is thence that Monseigneur now seeks to have her released—to your great astonishment, as well as mine, my dear baron. But it is growing late, and his royal highness is anxious that your courier should start for Geralstein with as little delay as possible."

"In two hours' time he shall be on the road. So now, my dear Murphy, farewell till the evening."

"Till the evening, adieu."

"Have you, then, forgotten that there is a grand ball at the * * * Embassy, and that his royal highness will be present?"

"True. I have always forgotten that, since the absence of Colonel Verner and the Count d'Harneim, I have the honour to fulfil the functions of chamberlain and aide-de-camp."

"Ah, *àpropos* of the count and the colonel, when may we expect their return? Will they have soon completed their respective missions?"

"You know that Monseigneur will keep them away as long as possible, that he may enjoy more solitude and liberty. As to the errand on which his royal highness has employed each of them, as an ostensible motive for getting rid of them in a quiet way—sending one to Avignon and the other to Strasbourg—I will tell you all about it some day, when we are both in a dull mood; for I will defy the most hypochondriacal person in existence not to burst with laughter at the narrative, as well as with certain passages in the despatches of these worthy gentlemen, who have assumed their pretended missions with so serious an air."

"To tell the truth, I have never clearly understood why his royal highness attached the colonel and the count to his private person."

"Why, my dear fellow, is not Colonel Verner the accurate type of military perfection? Is there, in the whole Germanic confederation, a more elegant figure, more flourishing and splendid moustaches, and a more complete military figure? And when he is fully decorated, screwed in, uniformed, gold-laced, plumed, &c. &c., it is impossible to see a more glorious, self-satisfied, proud, handsome—animal."

"True; but it is his very good looks that prevent him from having the appearance of a man of refined and acute intellect."

"Well! and Monseigneur says that, thanks to the colonel, he is in the habit of finding even the dullest people in the world bearable. Before certain audiences, which are of necessity, he shuts himself up with the colonel for a half-hour or so, and then leaves him, full of spirits and light as air, quite ready to meet bores and defy them."

"Just as the Roman soldier who, before a forced march, used to sole his sandals with lead, and so found all fatigue light by leaving them off, I now discover the usefulness of the colonel. But the Count d'Harneim?"

"Is also very serviceable to our dear lord; for, always hearing at his side the tinkling of this old cracked bell, shining and chattering—continually seeing this soap-bubble so puffed up with nothingness, so magnificently variegated, and, as such, portraying the theatrical and puerile phase of sovereign power—his royal highness feels the more sensibly the vanity of those barren pomps and glories of the world, and, by contrast, has often derived the most serious and happy ideas from the contemplation of his useless and pattering chamberlain."

"Well, well; but let us be just, my dear Murphy: tell me, in what court in the world would you find a more perfect model of a chamberlain? Who knows better than dear old D'Harneim the numberless rules and strict observances of etiquette? Who bears with more becoming demeanour an enamelled cross round his neck, or more majestically comports himself when the keys of office are suspended from his shoulders?"

"*Apropos*, baron; Monseigneur declares that the shoulders of a chamberlain have a peculiar physiognomy: that is, he says, an appearance at once constrained and repulsive, which it is painful to look at; for, alas and alackaday! it is at the back of a chamberlain that the symbol of his office glitters, and, as Monseigneur avers, the worthy D'Harneim always seems tempted to present himself backwards, that his importance may at once be seen, felt, and acknowledged."

"The fact is, that the incessant subject of the count's meditations is to ascertain by what fatal imagination and direction the chamberlain's key has been placed behind the chamberlain's back; for it is related of him that he said, with his accustomed good sense, and with a kind of bitter grief, 'What, the devil! one does not open a door with one's back, at all events!'"

"Baron, the courier! the courier!" said Murphy, pointing to the clock.

"Sad old reprobate, to make me chatter thus! it is your fault. Present my respects to his royal highness," said M. de Graün, taking his hat up in haste. "And now, adieu till the evening, my dear Murphy."

"Till the evening, my dear baron, fare thee well. It will be late before we meet, for I am sure that Monseigneur will go this very day to pay a visit to the mysterious house in the Rue du Temple."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HOUSE IN THE RUE DU TEMPLE.

In order to profit by the particulars furnished by Baron de Graün respecting La Goualeuse and Germain, the Schoolmaster's son, it became necessary for Rodolph to visit the house in the Rue du Temple, formerly the abode of that young man, whose retreat the prince likewise hoped to

Madame Pipelet.

discover through the intervention of Mademoiselle Rigolette. Although prepared to find it a difficult task, inasmuch as it was more than probable, if the grisette were really sufficiently in Germain's confidence to be aware of his present abode, she also knew too well his anxiety to conceal it to be likely to give the desired information.

By renting the chamber lately occupied by the young man, Rodolph, besides being on the spot to follow up his researches, considered he should also be enabled to observe closely the different individuals inhabiting the rest of the house.

The same day on which the conversation passed between the Baron de Graün and Murphy, Rodolph, plainly and unpretendingly dressed, wended his way about three o'clock, on a gloomy November afternoon, towards the Rue du Temple.

Situated in a district of much business and dense population, the house in question had nothing remarkable in its appearance: it was composed of a ground-floor, occupied by a man keeping a low sort of dram-shop, and four upper stories, surmounted by attics. A dark and narrow alley led to a small yard, or, rather, a species of square well, of about five or six feet in width, completely destitute of either air or light, and serving as a pestilential receptacle for all the filth thrown by the various occupants of the respective chambers from the unglazed sashes with which each landing-place was provided.

At the bottom of a damp, dismal-looking staircase, a glimmering light indicated the porter's residence, rendered smoky and dingy by the constant burning of a lamp, requisite, even at mid-day, to enlighten the gloomy hole, into which Rodolph entered for the purpose of asking leave to view the apartment then vacant.

A lamp, placed behind a glass globe filled with water, served as a reflector; and by its light might be seen, at the far end of the *lodge* (as in courtesy it was styled), a bed, covered with a sort of patchwork counterpane, exhibiting a mingled mass of every known colour and material. A walnut-tree table graced the side of the room, bearing a variety of articles suited to the taste and ornamental notions of its owners. First in order appeared a little waxen St. John, with a very fat lamb at his feet, and a large peruke of flowing white curls on his head, the whole enclosed in a cracked glass case, the joinings of which were ingeniously secured by slips of blue paper; secondly, a pair of old plated candlesticks, tarnished by time, and bearing, instead of lights, two gilded oranges—doubtless an offering to the porteress on the last new-year's day; and, thirdly, two boxes, the one composed of variegated straw, the other covered with multitudinous shells, but both smelling strongly of the galleys or house of correction*—(let us hope, for the sake of the morality of the porteress in the Rue du Temple, that these precious specimens were not presented to her from the original owners and fabricators of them); — and, lastly, between the two boxes, and just beneath a circular clock, was suspended a pair of red morocco dress-boots, small enough for the feet of fairies, but elaborately and skilfully designed and completed. This *chef-d'œuvre*, as the ancient masters of the craft would style them, joined to the fantastic designs sketched on the walls representing boots and shoes, abundantly indicated that the porter of this establishment devoted his time and his talents to the repairing of shoes and shoe leather.

At the instant when Rodolph ventured into the smoky den, Monsieur

* These boxes were the exclusive manufacture of the criminals confined either in the galleys or prisons, and who spent nearly all their spare hours in making them.

Pipelet, the porter, temporarily absent, had left his better half, Madame Pipelet, as his representative. This individual was seated by the stove in the centre of the lodge, deeply engrossed in watching the boiling of a pot placed over it. The description of Madame Pipelet may be given in a few words. She was the most ugly, forbidding, wrinkled, toothless old hag, one might meet with in the course of a long life. Her dress was dirty, tawdry, and untidy; while her head-dress was composed of a

Brutus wig, originally of a blond colour, but changed by time into every shade of red, brown, and yellow, the stiff ends of the perished hair standing out like the ears of wheat in a wheat-sheaf. Much did Madame Pipelet pride herself upon this tasteful covering to her sexagenarian skull; nor was it believed she ever laid it aside, whether sleeping or waking.

At the sight of Rodolph the porteress inquired, in a surly tone,

"Well, and pray what do *you* want?"

"I believe, madam," replied Rodolph, laying a profound emphasis on the word *madam*, "I believe there is an apartment to be let in this house?"

The deep respect implied in his voice and words somewhat mollified the porteress, who answered, rather less sourly,

"Yes, there is a room to let on the fourth floor, but you cannot see it now—Alfred has gone out."

"You are speaking of your son, I presume, madam: may I take the liberty of asking whether he is expected in shortly?"

"I am *not* speaking of my son, but my husband. I suppose there is no act of parliament why my Pipelet should not be called 'Alfred.' Is there, pray?"

"None, certainly, madam, that I am aware of: but, with your kind permission, I will await his return. I am very desirous of taking the vacant chamber—both the street and neighbourhood suit me; and the admirable order in which the house seems kept, pleases me excessively. But, previously to viewing the lodging I am anxious to take, I should be very glad to ascertain whether you, madam, could do me the favour to take the management of my little housekeeping off my hands? I never like to have any one about me but the authorised housekeeper belonging to the house, when such arrangements meet with their approbation."

This proposition, so flatteringly expressed, and the word "housekeeper," completely won Madame Pipelet, who replied,

"With the greatest of pleasure, sir, I will attend to all you require. I am sure I shall be proud to wait upon such a gentleman; and, for the small charge of six francs a-month, you shall be treated like a prince."

"Then, for six francs a-month, I may reckon upon your valuable services. Will you permit me to ask your name?"

"Pomona-Fortunata-Anastasia Pipelet."

"Well, then, Madame Pipelet, having agreed as to your own terms, will you be pleased to tell me those for the apartment I wish to engage?"

"With the adjoining small closet, one hundred and fifty francs a-month—not a farthing less. The principal lessee is a screw—a regular skin-flint."

"What is his name?"

"Monsieur Bras Rouge."

This name, and the remembrances so unexpectedly presented by it, made Rodolph start.

"I think, Madame Pipelet, you were saying that the principal lessee of the house is ——"

"M. Bras Rouge."

"And he lives ——"

"Rue aux Fêves, No. 13. He also keeps an estaminet near the Champs Elysées."

All doubt was then at an end—it was the Bras Rouge of infamous notoriety; and singular indeed did the circumstance of thus coming across him strike Rodolph.

"But though M. Bras Rouge is your principal lessee, he is not, I presume, the owner of the house: may I ask who is?"

"M. Bourdon: but I have never had communication with any one besides M. Bras Rouge."

With the design of still further ingratiating himself with the porteress, Rodolph resumed:

"My dear madam, this cold day would make a little of something warm and comfortable very acceptable. Might I venture to solicit the favour of your stepping as far as the spirit-shop, kept so conveniently at hand, and bring a bottle of cassia and two glasses? for I feel very tired, and the cold has quite seized me. Stay, madam, we will have three glasses, if you please; because I hope your husband will join us when he returns."

So saying, he placed a franc in the fat, dirty hand, of the porteress.

"Ah, monsieur, you are determined to make us all fall in love with you!" cried Madame Pipelet, nodding her approval of the commission, and thereby sending the flush of pleasure into a face glowing with all the fiery honours of an excited Bacchante.

"To be sure! There is nothing like a drop of really good cordial such a day as this; and they do keep most excellent here at hand. I'll go—of course I will: but I shall only bring a couple of glasses, for Alfred and I always drink out of the same glass. Poor old darling! he is so very nice and particular in shewing all those sort of delicate attentions to women."

"Then go along, my good Madame Pipelet, and we will wait till Alfred comes."

"But, then, suppose any one wants me whilst I am out, who will mind the lodge?"

"Oh! I'll take care of the lodge."

The old woman departed on her agreeable errand.

At the termination of a few minutes the postman tapped at the lodge window, and putting his hand into the apartment presented two letters, merely saying, "Three sous."

"Six sous, you mean, for two letters," replied Rodolph.

"One is free," answered the man.

Having paid and dismissed the postman, Rodolph mechanically examined the two letters thus committed to his charge; but at a further glance they seemed to him worthy a more attentive observation. The epistle addressed to Madame Pipelet exhaled through its hot-pressed envelope a strong odour of russia leather: it bore, on a seal of red wax, the initials "C. R.," surmounted by a helmet, and supported by a cross of the Legion of Honour. The direction was written in a firm, bold hand. The heraldic device of the commingled casque and cross made Rodolph smile, and confirmed him in the idea that the writer of the letter in question was not a female. Who was this scented, emblazoned correspondent of old Anastasia Pipelet? Rodolph felt an undefinable curiosity to know. The other epistle, written upon coarse and common paper, was united only by a common wafer, pricked over with the point of a pin, and was addressed to "M. César Bradamanti, Operating Dentist." Evidently disguised, the superscription was entirely composed of capital letters. Whether founded on a true or false presage, this letter seemed to Rodolph to wear a mournful look, as though evil or misery were contained within

its shabby folds. He perceived that some of the letters in the direction were fainter than the others, and that the paper there seemed a little rumpled: a tear had evidently fallen upon it.

Madame Pipelet returned, bearing the bottle of cassia and two glasses:

"I have dawdled—have I not, monsieur?" said she, gaily. "But let you once get into that good Père Joseph's shop, and it is hard work to get out again. Oh! that old man is a very insinuating——"

"Here, madam," interrupted Rodolph, "here are two letters the postman left while you were gone."

"Dear me! two letters! Pray excuse me, monsieur. I suppose you paid for them?"

"I did."

"You are very good. I tell you what, then, we will settle that out of the first money you have to pay *me:* how much was it?"

"Three sous," answered Rodolph, much amused at the ingenious method of reimbursement employed by Madame Pipelet. "But may I, without offence, observe that one of the letters is addressed to you, and that you possess in the writer a correspondent whose *billets doux* are marvellously well perfumed?"

"Let us see what it is about," said the porteress, taking the epistle in the scented envelope. "Yes, upon my word, it is scented up like a real *billet doux!* Now, I should very much like to know who would dare write ME a love-letter! He must be a villain!"

"And suppose it had fallen into your husband's hands, Madame Pipelet?"

"Oh! for goodness' sake don't mention that, or I shall faint away in your arms! But how stupid I am! Now I know all about it," replied the fat porteress, shrugging her shoulders. "To be sure! to be sure! it comes from the *Commandant!* Lord bless me, what a fright I have had! for Alfred is as jealous as a Turk."

"Here is another letter, addressed to M. César Bradamanti."

"Ah! to be sure, the dentist on the third floor. I will put it in the LETTER-BOOT."

Rodolph fancied he had not caught the right words, but, to his astonishment, he saw Madame Pipelet gravely throw the letter alluded to into an old top-boot hanging up against the wall. He looked at her with surprise.

"Do you mean," said he, at length, "to put the gentleman's letter in ——"

"Oh, yes! that is all right," replied the porteress. "I have put it in the LETTER-BOOT—there, you see. So now nobody's letters can be mislaid; and when the different lodgers return home, Alfred or myself turn the boot upside down—we sort them out, and every body gets his own."

So saying, the porteress proceeded to break the seal of the letter addressed to her; which having done, she turned it round and round, looked at it in every direction, then, after a short appearance of embarrassment and uncertainty, she said to Rodolph,

"Alfred generally reads my letters for me, because I do not happen to be able to read them myself; perhaps you would not mind just looking over this for me?"

"With the utmost pleasure!" quickly replied Rodolph, curious to dive into the mysteries of who Madame Pipelet's correspondent might be; and forthwith he read what follows, written upon hot-pressed paper, stamped in its right-hand corner with the helmet, the letters "C. R.," the heraldic supporters, and the cross of honour.

"To-morrow (Friday), about eleven o'clock, let there be a good (not an over-fierce) fire be lighted in both rooms; have every thing well dusted, and remove the coverings from the furniture, taking especial care not to scratch the gilding, or to soil or burn the carpet while lighting the fires. If I should not be in about one o'clock, when a lady will arrive in a hackney-coach and inquire for me by the name of M. Charles, let her be shewn up to the apartment; after which the key is to be taken down stairs again, and kept till my arrival."

Spite of the want of finished composition displayed in this *billet*, Rodolph perfectly comprehended to whom and what it alluded, and merely added, after perusing it,

"Who lives on the first floor, then?"

The old woman placed her yellow, shrivelled finger, upon her pendulous lip, and replied, by a half-malicious grin,

"Hush! there is a woman in the way—silence!"

"Oh, my dear Madame Pipelet, I merely asked because, before living in a house, one likes to know a little."

"Yes, yes! Of course, every body likes to know all they can: that is all fair enough; and I am sure I have no objection to tell you all I know myself, and that is but very little. Well, but to begin. About six weeks ago a carpet-maker came here to look at the first floor, which was then to let, and to ask the price, and other particulars about it. Next day he came again, accompanied by a young man of fair complexion, small moustaches, and wearing a cross of honour and very fine linen. The carpet-maker called him *Commandant*."

"A military man, I suppose?" said Rodolph.

"Military!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, with a chuckle. "Not he! Why, Alfred might as well call himself porter to a prince."

"How so?"

"Why, he is only in the National Guard! The carpet-maker only called him commandant to flatter him: just the same as it tickles up Alfred's vanity to be styled *concierge* instead of porter. So when the commandant (that is the only name we know him by) had looked over the rooms, he said to the upholsterer, his friend, 'Well, I think the place will do for me—just see the landlord, and arrange all about it.' 'Yes, commandant,' says the other. And the very next day the upholsterer-man signed the lease with M. Bras Rouge (in his own name, mind you); and, further, paid six months in advance, because, he said, the gentleman did not wish to be bored about references. And such a power of fine furniture as was sent into the first floor! *Sophesus* (sarcophagus) curtains, all silk; glasses set in gold, and every thing you can mention, all beautiful enough to astonish you; just, for all the world, like one of them grand *cafés* on the Boulevards! As for the carpets! oh! you never trod on the like of them, I'll be bound. Put your foot on them, and you'd fancy you was stepping on velvet, and take it off again for fear of spoiling it. When every thing was completed, the commandant came to look at it—just to see if he could find out any thing more he wanted: but he could not. So then he spoke to Alfred, and says he, 'Could you take charge of my rooms and keep them in nice order, light fires from time to time, and get them ready for me when I wish to occupy them? I shall not be here often,' says he, 'and would always write you a line before coming, to give you time to prepare them.' 'Yes, commandant, I can,' answers my flatterer of an Alfred. 'And what shall you charge?' 'Twenty francs a-month, commandant.' 'Twenty francs!' exclaimed the commandant. 'Why, porter, you are jesting, surely!' And hereupon he began bating Alfred down in the most shabby manner, trying to squeeze poor people like us out of two or three miserable francs, when he had been squandering thousands in fitting up his grand apartments, which, after all, he did not mean to live in! However, after a deal of battling, we got twelve francs a-month out of him—a paltry, pitiful, two-farthing captain! What a difference, now, between you and him!" added the porteress, addressing Rodolph with an admiring glance. "You don't call yourself fine names and titles—you only look like a plain body—you must be poor, or you would not perch yourself on the fourth floor; and yet you agreed with me for six francs, without attempting to bate me down!"

"And when did the commandant pay you his next visit?"

"I'll tell you,—and good fun it is, too. My gentleman must have been nicely choused by somebody. Three times did he write (same as to-day), ordering us to light a fire and have every thing ready for the reception of a lady he expected would come.—Come! yes, I daresay he may expect a long time first, I rather think."

"Nobody came then?"

"Listen. The first time the commandant arrived, strutting and swelling like a turkey-cock, humming and singing, after his manner, all the gay tunes of the day, walking up and down his fine room with his hands stuck in his pockets, and occasionally stopping to arrange his hair before the glass,—we were watching him all the time. Well, this went

on for two or three hours, when, I suppose, he knew it was no use waiting any longer; so he came down stairs very softly, and with quite a different manner to the pride and consequence he had marched up with. By way of teasing him, Pipelet and I went out to him and said, 'Commandant, there has been no lady whatever to inquire for you.' 'Very well! very well!' exclaimed he, half mad and half ashamed of being laughed at, and, buttoning up his coat, he walked off as fast as he could. The next time, before he came himself, a small note was brought here by a man directed to M. Charles; I strongly suspected he was done again, and Pipelet and me were enjoying a hearty good laugh over it when the commandant arrived, 'Captain,' says I, putting the back of my hand up to my wig, by way of military salute, 'here is a letter for you, but I am afraid it contains news of a second countermarch against you.' He looked at me sour as a crab, snatched the letter from my hand, read it, turned

scarlet as a boiled lobster, then walked off pretending to whistle; but he was finely vexed—ready to hang himself, I could see he was—and it was

rare nuts to me. 'Go, and swallow that pill, my two-farthing captain,' says I to myself; 'that serves you right for only giving twelve francs a-month for minding your apartments.'

"And the third time?"

"Ah! the third time I really thought it was all right. The commandant arrived more stuck up with pride than ever; his eyes staring with self-satisfied admiration at himself and the certainty of not being disappointed this time. Let me tell the truth about him; he really is a good-looking man and dresses well, though he stinks of musk like a civet cat. Well, there was my gentleman arrayed in all his finery, and scarcely condescending to look at us poor folks; he seemed as though he conferred a favour on the earth by deigning to walk on it, and went, sticking his nose into the air, as if he meant to touch the clouds with it. He took the key, and said to us as he passed up stairs, in a jeering, self-complacent tone, as though to revenge himself for having been laughed at twice before, 'You will direct the lady to my apartments when she comes.' Well, Pipelet and I were so anxious to see the lady he expected, though we did not much reckon upon her keeping her appointment even if she ever made one, that we went and hid ourselves behind the little door that belongs to the alley; and, behold! in a short time a blue hackney-coach, with its blinds drawn down, stopped at the entrance to the house. 'There she is!' says I to Alfred. 'There is his madam; let's keep back a bit for fear we frighten her away.' The coachman got off his box and opened the door. Then we saw a female closely covered with a black veil and carrying a muff; she had apparently been crying, for she kept her handkerchief to her face; for when the steps were let down, instead of alighting she said some few words to the driver, who, much surprised, shut the door up again."

"Then the lady did not get out?"

"No! she threw herself back in the coach and pressed her handkerchief tightly to her eyes. I rushed out, and before the coachman had time to get on his seat again I called out, 'Halloo! there, coachy! are you going back again?' 'Yes,' says he. 'Where?' says I. 'Where I came from,' answers he. 'And where did you come from?' asks I again. 'From the Rue Saint Dominique, corner of the Rue Belle Chasse.'"

Rodolph started at these words. His dearest friend, the Marquis d'Harville, who, as elsewhere stated, had been for some time labouring under a deep melancholy none could penetrate, lived in the very place just mentioned by Madame Pipelet. Could this mysterious female in the blue fiacre be the Marquise d'Harville? and was it from the lightness and frivolity of her conduct that the mind of her excellent husband was bowed down by doubts and misgivings? These painful suggestions crowded on Rodolph's mind, but, although well acquainted with all the various guests received by the marquise, he could recollect no one answering the description of the commandant; added to which, any female might have taken a hackney-coach from that spot without necessarily living in the street. There was really nothing to identify the unknown of the blue fiacre with Madame d'Harville, and yet a thousand vague fears and painful suspicions crossed his mind: his uneasy manner and deep abstraction did not escape the porteress.

"What are you thinking of, sir?" asked she at length.

"I was wondering what could have induced the lady, after coming to the very door, to change her mind so suddenly."

"There is no saying: some sudden thought—dread or fear—for we poor women are but weak, cowardly things," said the porteress, assuming a timid, frightened manner. 'Well, I think if it had been myself now coming secretly to visit Alfred, I should have had to try back a great many times before I could have screwed up my courage to venture in. But, then, as for visiting your great dons in this kind of way, I never could have done such a thing. No, never! I am sure there is nobody under the face of heaven can say I ever give them the least freedom,—I should think not, indeed, while my poor dear old darling of a husband is left."

"No doubt,—no doubt, Madame Pipelet; but about the young person you were describing in the blue fiacre?"

"Oh! mind I don't know whether she was young or old, I could not even catch a glimpse of the tip of her nose; all I can say is she went as she came, and that is all about it. As for Alfred and me, we were better pleased than if we had found ten francs."

"Why so?"

"By enjoying the rage and confusion of the commandant when he found himself a third time disappointed; but, instead of going and telling him at once that his 'madam' had been and gone, we allowed him to fume and fret for a whole hour. Then I went softly up stairs with only my list slippers on. I reached his door, which I found half shut; as I pushed against it, it creaked; the staircase is black as night, and the entrance to the apartment quite as obscure. Scarcely had I crept into the room when the commandant caught me in his arms, saying in a languishing voice, 'My dearest angel! what makes you so late?'"

Spite of the serious nature of the thoughts crowding upon his mind, Rodolph could not restrain a smile as he surveyed the grotesque periwig and hideously wrinkled, carbuncled visage, of the heroine of this comic scene.

Madame Pipelet, however, resumed her narration with a mirthful chuckle that increased her ugliness:

"That was a go! wasn't it?—but stop a bit. Well, I did not make the least reply, but, almost keeping in my breath, I waited to see what would be the end of this strange reception. For a minute or two the commandant kept hugging me up, then, all of a sudden, the brute pushed me away, exclaiming with as much disgust as though he had touched a toad, 'Who the devil are you?' 'Me, commandant—the porteress—Madame Pipelet; and, as such, I will thank you to keep your hands off my waist, and not to call me your angel and scold me for being late. Suppose Alfred had heard you, a pretty business we should have made of it!' 'What the deuce brings you here?' cried he. 'Merely to let you know the lady in the hackney-coach has just arrived.' 'Well, then, you stupid old fool! shew her up directly. Did I not tell you to do so?' 'Yes, commandant; you said I was to shew her up.' 'Then why do you not obey me?' 'Because the lady——' 'Speak out, woman! if you can.' 'The lady has gone again.' 'Something you have said or done, then, to offend her, I am sure!' roared he in a perfect fury. 'Not at all, commandant. The lady did not alight, but when the coach stopped and the driver opened the door, she desired him to take her back to where she came from.' 'The vehicle cannot have got far by this time,' exclaimed the commandant, hastening towards the door. 'It has been gone upwards of an hour,' answered I, enjoying his fury and disappointment. 'An hour! an hour! and what, in the devil's name, hindered you from letting me know this sooner?' 'Because, commandant, Alfred and I thought we would spare you as long as we could the tidings of this third break-down, which we fancied might be too much for you.'—Come, thinks I, there is something to make you remember flinging me out of your arms, as though it made you sick to touch me. 'Begone!' bawled out the commandant, 'you hideous old hag! you can neither say nor do the thing that is right. And with this he pulled off his dressing-gown and threw his beautiful Greek cap, made of velvet embroidered with gold, on the ground: it was a real shame, for the cap was a downright beauty; and as for the dressing-gown, oh my! it would set any body longing. Meanwhile the commandant kept pacing the room, with his eyes glaring like a wild beast and glowing like two glow-worms."

"But were you not afraid of losing his employ?"

"He knew too well what he was about for that; we had him in a fix, we knew where his 'madam' lived, and had he said any thing to us, we should have threatened to expose the whole affair. And who do you think for his beggarly twelve francs would have undertaken to attend to his rooms—a stranger? No! that we would have prevented; we would soon have made the place too hot to hold any person he might appoint—poor, shabby fellow that he is! What do you think? he actually had the meanness to examine his wood and put out the quantity he should allow to be burnt while he was away. He is nothing but an upstart, I am sure—a nobody, who has suddenly tumbled into money he does not know

how to spend properly—a rich man's head and a beggar's body, who squanders with one hand and nips and pinches with the other. I do not wish him any harm, but it amuses me immensely to think how he has been befooled; and he will still go on believing and expecting from day to day, because he is too vain to imagine he is being laughed at. At any rate, if the lady ever comes in reality, I will let my friend the oyster-woman next door know; she enjoys a joke as well as I do, and is quite as curious as myself to find out what sort of person she is, whether fair or dark, pretty or plain. And—who knows?—this woman may be cheating some easy-going simpleton of a husband for the sake of our twopenny-halfpenny of a commandant! Well, that is no concern of mine, but I am sorry, too, for the poor, dear, deceived individual, whoever he may be.——Dear me! dear me! my pot is boiling over—excuse me a minute, I must just look to it. Ah! it is time Alfred was in, for dinner is quite ready, and tripe, you know, should never be kept waiting. This tripe is done to a turn. Do you prefer the thick or thin tripe? Alfred likes it thick. The poor darling has been sadly out of spirits lately, and I got this dainty dish to cheer him up a bit; for, as Alfred says himself, that for a bribe of good thick tripe he would betray France itself—his beloved France. Yes, the dear old pet would change his country for such fine fat tripe as this, he would."

While Madame Pipelet was thus delivering her domestic harangue upon the virtues of tripe and the powerful influence it possessed over even the patriotism of her husband, Rodolph was buried in the deepest and most sombre reflections. The female, whose visit to the house had just

been detailed, be she the Marquise d'Harville or any other individual, had evidently long struggled with her imprudence ere she had brought herself to grant a first and second rendezvous, and then, terrified at the probable consequences of her imprudence, a salutary remorse had, in all probability, prevented her from fulfilling her dangerous engagement. It might be that the fine person this M. Charles was described as possessing had

captivated the senses of Madame d'Harville, whom Rodolph knew well as a woman of deep feeling, high intellect, and superior taste, of an elevated turn of mind, and a reputation unsullied by the faintest breath of slander. After long and mature consideration, he succeeded in persuading himself that the wife of his friend had nothing to do with the unknown female in the blue fiacre. Madame Pipelet, having completed her culinary arrangements, resumed her conversation with Rodolph.

"And who lives on the second floor?" inquired he of the porteress.

"Why, Mother Burette does,—a most wonderful woman at fortune-telling; bless you! she can read in your hand the same as a book, and many quite first-rate people come to her to have the cards consulted when they are anxious about any particular matter. She earns her weight in gold, and that is not a trifle, for she is a rare bundle of an old body. However, telling fortunes is only one of her means of gaining a livelihood."

"Why, what does she do besides?"

"She keeps what you would call a pawnbroker's shop upon a small scale."

"I see; your second-floor lodger lends out again the money she derives from her skill in foretelling events by reading the cards."

"Exactly so; only she is cheaper and more easy to deal with than the regular pawnbrokers: she does not confuse you with a heap of paper tickets and duplicates—nothing of the sort. Now suppose:—Some one brings Mother Burette a shirt worth three francs; well, she lends ten sous upon condition of being paid twenty at the end of the week, otherwise she keeps the shirt for ever: that is simple enough, is it not? always in round figures, you see,—a child could understand it. And the odd things she has brought her as pledges you would scarcely believe. You can hardly guess what she sometimes is asked to lend upon: I saw her once advance money upon a grey parrot that swore like a trooper—the blackguard did."

"A parrot? but to what amount did she advance money?"

"I'll tell you: the parrot was well known, it belonged to a Madame Herbelot, the widow of a factor, living close by; and it was also well understood that Madame Herbelot valued her parrot as much as she did her life. Well, Mother Burette said to her, 'I will lend you ten francs on your bird, but if by this day week at twelve o'clock I do not receive twenty francs with interest (it would amount to that in round numbers); if I am not paid my twenty francs, with the expenses of his keep, I shall give your Polly a trifling dose of arsenic mixed with his food. She knew her customer well, bless you! However, by this threat Mother Burette received her twenty francs at the end of seven days, and Madame Herbelot got back her disagreeable screaming parrot."

"Mother Burette has no other way of living besides the two you have named, I suppose?"

"Not that I know of. I don't know, however, what to say of some rather sly and secret transactions, carried on in a small room she never allows any one to enter, except M. Bras Rouge and an old one-eyed woman, called La Chouette."

Rodolph opened his eyes with unmixed astonishment as these names sounded on his ear, and the porteress, interpreting the surprise of her future lodger according to her own notions, said,

"That name would make any one stare with astonishment. Certainly, La Chouette is uncommonly odd: is it not?"

"It is, indeed. Does the woman who is so styled come here frequently?"

"We saw her the day before yesterday, for the first time these six weeks. She was rather lame, I observed."

"And what do you suppose she wants with the fortune-telling woman?"

"That I do not know; at least, as to what takes place in the little room I was telling you of, where La Chouette alone is admitted with M. Bras Rouge and Mother Burette. I have, however, particularly observed, that on those occasions the one-eyed woman always has a large bundle with her in her basket, and that M. Bras Rouge also carries a parcel of some size beneath his cloak, and that they always return empty-handed."

"And what can these packets contain?"

"The Lord above knows, for I don't; only they kick up the devil's own row with them, whatever they are. And then such whiffs of sulphur, charcoal, and melted lead, as you go up the stairs; and blow, blow, blow, like a smith's forge. I verily believe Mother Burette has dealings with the old one, and practises magic in this private apartment; leastways, that is what M. César Bradamanti, our third-floor lodger, said to me. A very clever individual is M. César. When I say an 'individual,' I mean an Italian, though he speaks as good French as you or me, excepting his accent, and that is nothing. Oh, he is very clever, indeed! knows all about physic; and pulls out teeth, not for the sake of the money but the honour of his profession—yes, really, sir, for downright honour. Now, suppose you had six decayed teeth—and he says the same thing to all who choose to listen to him—well, then he will take out five for nothing, and only charge you for the sixth. Besides which, he sells all manner of

remedies for all sorts of complaints—diseases of the lungs, coughs, colds, every complaint you can name: but then he makes his own drugs, and he has for his assistant the son of our principal lessee, little Tortillard. He says that his master is going to buy himself a horse and a red coat, and to sell his drugs in the market-places, and that young Tortillard is to be dressed like a page and be at the drum, to attract customers."

"This seems to me a very humble occupation for the son of your principal lessee."

"Why, his father says unless he gets a pretty strong hand over him, and a tolerably powerful taste of whip-cord, in the way of a sound thrashing, every now and then, he is safe to come to the scaffold. And he is about the ugliest, most spiteful, ill-disposed young rascal, one would wish to meet: he has played more than one abominable trick upon poor M. César Bradamanti, who is the best creature possible; for he cured Alfred of a rheumatic attack, and I promise you we have not forgotten it.

Yet there are some people wicked enough to—— But, no I will not tell you: it would make the hair of your head stand on end. As Alfred says, if it were true it would send him to the galleys."

"Why, what do they accuse him of?"

"Oh, I really cannot tell you! I can't, indeed; for it is so——"

"Then we will drop the subject."

"And to say such things of a young man! Upon my life and soul, it is too bad."

"Pray, Madame Pipelet, do not give yourself the trouble of saying any more about it: let us speak of other matters."

"Why, I don't know but, as you are to live in the house, it is only fair and right to prepare you for any falsehoods you may hear. I suppose you are sufficiently well off to make the acquaintance of M. César Bradamanti, and unless you are put on your guard against these reports, they might lead to your breaking off with him. So, just put your ear down and I 'll whisper what it is people say about him."

And the old woman, in a low tone, muttered a few words as Rodolph inclined his head: he started from her, with mingled disgust and horror.

"Impossible!" exclaimed he. "Surely human nature is not capable of such crimes!"

"Shocking! is it not? But treat it as I do—all scandal and lies. What, do you think the man who cured Alfred's rheumatism—who draws five teeth out of six for nothing—who has *testimonies* (testimonials) from every prince and king in the world—and, above all, pays as he goes, down on the nail, would go for to do such things? Not he! I 'll stake my blessed life upon it."

While Madame Pipelet thus vented her indignant opinion concerning the reports in circulation, Rodolph recalled to his memory the letter he had seen addressed to the quack-dentist; he remembered the counterfeited writing and the coarse, common paper, stained with tears, which had well nigh obliterated part of the address—too well did he see in the mysterious grief-stained epistle the opening of a drama of deep and fearful import; and while these sad presages filled his mind, a powerful impression whispered within him that the dreadful doings ascribed to the Italian were not altogether unfounded.

"Oh! I declare, here comes Alfred!" exclaimed the porteress. "Now he will tell you his opinion of all these spiteful stories about poor M. Bradamanti. Bless you! Alfred thinks him as innocent as a lamb, ever since he cured his rheumatics."

M. Pipelet entered the lodge with a grave, magisterial air. He was about sixty years of age, comfortably fat, with a large, broad countenance, strongly resembling in its cast and style the faces carved upon the far-famed nutcrackers of Nuremberg; a nose, of more than ordinary proportions, helping to complete the likeness. An old and dingy-looking hat, with a very deep brim, surmounted the whole. Alfred, who adhered to this upper ornament as tenaciously as his wife did to her Brutus wig, was further attired in an ancient green coat, with immense flaps turned up with grease—if so might be described the bright and shiny patches of long-accumulated dirt, which had given an entirely different hue to some portions of the garment. But, though clad in a hat and coat esteemed

by Pipelet and his wife as closely resembling full-dress, Alfred had not laid aside the modest emblem of his trade, but from his waist uprose the buff-coloured triangular front of his leathern apron, partly concealing a waistcoat boasting nearly as great a variety of colours as did the patch-work counterpane of Madame Pipelet.

The porter's recognition of Rodolph as he entered was gracious in the extreme; but, alas! he smiled a melancholy welcome, and his countenance and languid air marked a man of secret sorrow.

"Alfred," said Madame Pipelet, when she had introduced her two companions, "here is a gentleman after the apartment on the fourth floor, and we have only been waiting for you to drink a glass of cordial he sent for."

This delicate attention won for Rodolph the entire trust and confidence of the melancholy porter, who, touching the brim of his hat, said, in a deep bass voice worthy of being employed in a cathedral,

"We shall give the gentleman every satisfaction as porters, and, doubtless, he will act the same by us as a lodger: 'birds of a feather

flock together,' as the proverb says." Then, interrupting himself, M. Pipelet anxiously added: "Providing, sir, you are not a painter!"

"No, I am no painter, but a plain merchant's clerk."

"My most humble duty to you, sir. I congratulate you that Nature did not make you one of those monsters called artists."

"Artists, monsters!" returned Rodolph. "Tell me, pray, why you style them so."

Instead of replying, M. Pipelet elevated his clasped hands towards the ceiling, and allowed a heavy sound, between a grunt and a groan, to escape his overcharged breast.

"You must know, sir," said Madame Pipelet, in a low tone, to Rodolph, "that painters have embittered Alfred's life: they have worried my poor old dear almost out of his senses, and made him half-stupified, as you see him now." Then speaking loud, she added, in a caressing tone, "Oh, never mind the blackguard, there's a dear! but try and forget all about it, or you will be ill, and unable to eat the nice tripe I have got for your dinner."

"Let us hope I shall have courage and firmness enough for all things," replied M. Pipelet, with a dignified and resigned air: "but he has done me much harm; he has been my persecutor, almost my executioner,—long have I suffered, but now I despise him!—Ah!" said he, turning to Rodolph, "never allow a painter to enter your doors, they are the plague —the ruin—the destruction of a house!"

"You have, then, had a painter lodging with you, I presume?"

"Unhappily, sir, I did have one," replied M. Pipelet, with much bitterness, "and that one named Cabrion.—Ah!"

At the recollections brought back by this name, the porter's declaration of courage and endurance utterly failed him, and again his clenched fists were raised, as though to invoke the vengeance he had so lately described himself as despising.

"And was this individual the last occupant of the chamber I am about engaging?" inquired Rodolph.

"No, no! the last lodger was an excellent young man named M. Germain. No, this Cabrion had the room before he came. Ah! sir, since Cabrion left, he has all but driven me stark staring mad!"

"Did you, then, so much regret him?" asked Rodolph.

"Regret him!—regret Cabrion!" screamed the astounded porter: "why, only imagine, M. Bras Rouge paid him two quarters' rent to induce him to quit the place, for, unluckily, he had taken his apartments for a term. What a scamp he was! You have no idea of the horrible tricks he played off upon all the lodgers as well as us. Why, just to give you one little proof of his villany, there was hardly a single wind instrument he did not make use of as a sort of annoyance to the lodgers; from the French horn to the flageolet, he made use of all, and even carried his rascality so far as to play false and to keep blowing the same note for hours together: it was enough to worry one out of one's senses. Well, I suppose there were upwards of twenty different petitions sent to our chief lessee, M. Bras Rouge, to turn the beggar out; and, at last, he was only got rid of by paying him two quarters' rent—rather droll, is it not, for a landlord to pay his lodger? But, bless you! the house was so upset

by him that he might have had any price so he would but take himself off: however, he *did* go. And now you suppose we were clear of M.

Cabrion? I'll tell you. Next night, about eleven o'clock, I was in bed, when rap, rap, rap, comes to the gate; I pulls up the string—somebody walks up to my door, 'How do you do, porter?' says a voice; 'will you oblige me with a lock of your hair?' 'Somebody has mistaken the door,' says my wife. So I calls out to the stranger, 'You are wrong, friend, you want next door.' 'I think not,' returns the voice; 'this is No. 17, is it not? and the porter's name is Pipelet?—I'm all right; so please to open the door and oblige me with a lock of your beautiful hair.' 'My name is Pipelet, certainly,' answers I. 'Well, then, friend Pipelet, Cabrion has sent me for a piece of your hair; he says he must and he will have it.'"

As Pipelet uttered the last words he gave his head a mournful shake, and, folding his arms, assumed an attitude of martyrlike resolution.

"Do you perceive, sir? he sends to me, his mortal enemy, whom he overwhelmed with insults and continually outraged in every way, to beg a lock of my hair,—a favour which even ladies have been known to refuse to a lover!"

"But, supposing this Cabrion had been as good a lodger as was M. Germain," replied Rodolph, with some difficulty preserving the gravity of countenance, "do you think you might have accorded him the favour?"

"Not to the best lodger that treads shoe-leather would I grant a similar request," replied the man in the flapped hat, waving it majestically over his brows as he spoke; "it is contrary to my principles and habit to give my hair to any one,—only I should have refused with the most scrupulous regard to politeness."

"That is not all," chimed in the porteress. "Only conceive, sir, the abominable conduct of that Cabrion, who, from morning to night, at all hours and at all times, sends a swarm of vagabonds like himself to ask Alfred for a lock of his hair—always for Cabrion!"

"Ah! monsieur," sighed out poor Pipelet, "had I committed the most atrocious crimes, my sleep could not have been rendered more broken and unrefreshing; scarcely do I fall into a doze than I wake starting with the idea of being called by that cursed Cabrion! I suspect every body,—in each person who approaches me I see an emissary from my persecutor come to request a lock of my hair. I am losing my good spirits, my temper, and becoming gloomy, suspicious, peevish, and ill-natured. This infernal Cabrion has murdered my whole life!"

And Pipelet heaved so profound a sigh, that his hat, vibrating for some time from the consequences of the convulsive shake of the head occasioned thereby, fell forward and completely veiled his care-stricken features.

"I can well understand, now," said Rodolph, "that you are not particularly partial to painters; but I suppose the M. Germain you were praising so highly made up for the bad treatment you received from M. Cabrion?"

"Yes, yes, sir; as I told you, M. Germain was a delightful young man, so honourable and kind-hearted, open as the day, and ever ready to serve and oblige; he was cheerful and merry as need be, but then he always kept his high spirits within proper bounds instead of worrying people to death by his unmeaning hoaxes, like that Cabrion, who I wish was at the devil!"

"Come, come, my good Monsieur Pipelet, I must not let you thus excite yourself; and who, now, is the person fortunate enough to possess such a pattern of a lodger as this M. Germain seems to have been?"

"That is more than I can tell you; no one knows whither he has gone, nor are they likely, except, indeed, through Mademoiselle Rigolette."

"And who is Mademoiselle Rigolette?" demanded Rodolph.

"Why, she is a needlewoman, also living on the fourth floor," cried Madame Pipelet; "another pattern lodger, always pays her rent in advance, and keeps her little chamber so nice and clean; then she is well behaved to every one, so merry and happy, like a bird, though, poor

thing! very like a caged bird, obliged to work early and late to earn two francs a-day, and often not half that let her try ever so hard."

"How does it happen that Mademoiselle Rigolette should be the only person intrusted with the secret of M. Germain's present abode?"

"Why, when he was going away, he came to us and said," returned Madame Pipelet, "'I do not expect any letters; but if, by chance, any should come, please to give them to Mademoiselle Rigolette.' And she is well worthy of his confidence, if his letters were filled with gold; don't you think so, Alfred?"

"The fact is," said the porter, in a severe tone, "that I know no harm of Mademoiselle Rigolette, excepting her permitting herself to be wheedled over by that vile scamp, Cabrion."

"But you know, Alfred, that nothing more than a few harmless attentions passed between them," interrupted the porteress; "for, though Mademoiselle Rigolette is as merry as a kitten, she is as prudent and correct as I am myself. You should see the strong bolts she has inside her door; and if her next-door neighbour will make love to her, that is not her fault: it follows as a matter of course when people are so close to each other. It was just the same with the travelling-clerk we had here before Cabrion, and so it was when M. Germain took the room this abominable painter occupied. So, as I say, there is no blame to Mademoiselle Rigolette; it arises out of the two rooms joining one another so closely,—naturally that brings about a little flirtation, but nothing more."

"So, then, it becomes a matter of course, does it," said Rodolph, "that every one who occupies the apartment I am to have should make love to Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Why, of course, monsieur; how can you be good neighbours without it,—don't you see? Now, imagine yourself lodging in the very next room to a nice, pretty, obliging young person, like Mademoiselle Rigolette; well, then, young people will be young people,—sometimes you want a light, sometimes a few live coals to kindle up your fire, maybe a little water,—for one is sure always to find plenty of fresh spring-water at Mademoiselle Rigolette's, she is never without it, it is her only luxury,—she is like a little duck, always dabbling in it; and if she does happen to have a little leisure, such a washing down of floors and cleaning of windows! never the least soil or neglect about either herself or her apartment, and so you will find."

"And so M. Germain, by reason of his close proximity to Mademoiselle Rigolette, became what you style upon perfectly neighbourly terms with her?"

"Oh, bless you, yes! why, the two seemed cut out for each other, so young and so good-looking! It was quite a pleasure to look at them as they came down-stairs of a Sunday to take the only walk, poor things! they could afford themselves throughout the week; she dressed in a smart little cap and a gown that cost, probably, not more than twenty-five sous the ell, but made by herself, and that so tastily that it became her as much as though it had been of satin; he, mind ye, dressed and looking like a regular gentleman."

"And M. Germain has not been to see Mademoiselle Rigolette, I suppose, since he quitted the house?"

"No, monsieur; unless on Sunday, for Mademoiselle Rigolette has no time during the other six days of the week to think of sweethearting.

Why, the poor girl rises at five or six o'clock, and works incessantly till ten or eleven o'clock at night, never once leaving her room except for a few minutes in the morning, when she goes out to buy food for herself and her two canary-birds; and the three eat but very little, just a penn'orth of milk, a litttle bread, some chickweed, birdseed, and clear fresh water, and the whole three of them sing away as merrily as though they fared ever so sumptuously. And Ma'amselle Rigolette is kind and charitable, too, as far as lays in her power; that is to say, she gives her time, her sleep, and her services: for, poor girl! she can scarcely manage to keep herself by working closely for twelve hours a-day. Those poor, unfortunate creatures in the attics, whom M. Bras Rouge is going to turn into the streets in two or three days' time, if even he wait so long,—why Mademoiselle Rigolette and M. Germain sat up with the children night after night!"

"You have a distressed family, then, here?"

"Distressed! oh, God bless you, my good sir, I think we have, indeed. Why, there are five young children, an almost dying mother, an idiotic grandmother, and their only support a man who, though he slaves like a negro, cannot even get bread enough to eat—and a capital workman he is, too; three hours' sleep out of the twenty-four is all he allows himself,—and what sleep it is! broken by his children crying for food, by the groans of his sick wife tossing on her miserable straw bed, or the idiotic screams of the poor, bed-ridden, old grandmother, who sometimes howls like a wolf—from hunger, too—for, poor creature! she has not

sense or reason to know better, and when she gets very hungry you may hear cries and screams all down the staircase."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Rodolph, with a shudder; "and does no one afford them any assistance?"

"Truly, sir, we do all we can; we are but poor ourselves; however, since the commandant has allowed me his paltry twelve francs a-month for looking after his apartments, I have managed once a-week to make a little broth for these poor unfortunate creatures. Mademoiselle Rigolette deprives herself of her night's rest, and sits up, poor girl! (though it burns her candles), contriving out of one bit and the other of her cutting out to make up a few clothes for the children; sometimes from the morsels left of her work she manages a small nightcap or gown; and M. Germain, who had not a franc more than he knew what to do with, used to pretend, from time to time, that he had received a present of a few bottles of wine from his friends; and Morel (that is the name of the workman with the sick family) was sure to be invited to share it with him; and it was really wonderful to see how refreshed and strengthened poor Morel used to seem after M. Germain had made him take a good pull at his wine, to put, as he used to say, a little life and soul into his half-exhausted body."

"And the surgeon-dentist, what did he do for this wretched family?"

"M. Bradamanti?" said the porter; "ah! he cured my rheumatism, and I owe him my eternal gratitude; but from that very day I said to my wife, 'Anastasia, M. Bradamanti,'—hum!—hum!—did I not say so, Anastasia?"

"Exactly; that is precisely what you did say."

"But I want to know what this M. Bradamanti did to assist the poor starving beings in your garrets?"

"Why, you see, monsieur, when I mentioned to M. Bradamanti the misery and utter destitution of poor Morel,—by the way, he first began the conversation by complaining that the raving and screaming of the old idiot woman throughout the night for food prevented him from sleeping, and that he found it very unpleasant; however, he listened to my description of the state the whole family was in, and then he said, 'Well, if they are so much distressed, you may tell them that if they want any teeth drawn, I will excuse their paying even for the sixth.'"

"I tell you what, Madame Pipelet," said Rodolph, "I have a decidedly bad opinion of this man. And your female pawnbroker, was she more charitable?"

"Very much after the fashion of M. Bradamanti," said the porteress; "she lent a few sous upon their wretched clothes; every garment they had has passed into her hands, and even their last mattrass: but they were not long coming to the last, for they never had but two."

"But she gave them no further aid?"

"Help them, poor creatures! not she. Mother Burette is as great a brute in her way as her lover, M. Bras Rouge, is in his; for between you and I," added the porteress, with an uncommonly knowing wink of the eye and sagacious shake of the head, "there is something rather tender going on between these two."

"Really!" cried Rodolph.

"I think so—I do upon my life. And why not? why, the folks in Saint Martin are as loving as the rest of the world; are they not, my old pet?"

A melancholy shake of the head, which produced a corresponding motion in the huge black hat, was M. Pipelet's only answer. As for Madame Pipelet, since she had begun expressing sympathy for the poor sufferers in the attics, her countenance had ceased to strike Rodolph as repulsive, and he even thought it wore an agreeable expression.

"And what is this poor Morel's trade?"

"A maker of false jewellery; he works by the piece: but, dear me! that sort of work is so much imitated and so cheaply got up that—— For a man can but work his best, and he cannot do more than he can; besides, when you have got to find bread for seven persons without reckoning yourself, it is rather a hard job I take it. And though his eldest daughter does her best to assist the family, she has but very little in her power."

"How old is this daughter?"

"About eighteen, and as lovely a young creature as you would see in a long summer's day. She lives as servant with an old miserly fellow,

rich enough to buy and sell half Paris—a notary, named M. Jacques Ferrand."

"M. Jacques Ferrand!" exclaimed Rodolph, surprised at the fresh coincidence which brought under his notice the very individual from whom, or from whose confidential housekeeper, he expected to glean so many particulars relative to La Goualeuse. M. Jacques Ferrand, who lives in the Rue du Sentier, do you mean?" inquired he.

"The very same; are you acquainted with him?"

"Not at all; but he does the law business for the firm I belong to."

"Ah! then you must know that he is a regular money-grubbing old usurer; but, then, let me do the man justice. He is strictly religious, and devout as a monk; never absent from mass or vespers, making his Easter offerings, and going regularly to confession. If he ever enjoys himself, it is only along with the priests, drinking holy water, and eating blessed bread. Oh! he is almost a saint from the strictness of his life; but, then, his heart is as hard as iron, and as stern and rigid towards others as he is severe towards himself. Why, poor Louise, daughter to our sick lodger, has been his only servant for the last eighteen months. And what a good girl she is! gentle as a lamb in temper and disposition, but willing as a horse to work; and he only gives this poor thing, who slaves herself to death for him, eighteen francs a-month,—not a farthing more, I give you my word; and out of this she only keeps back six francs for her own maintenance, and hands over the other twelve to her starving family: that has been all their dependence for some time past; but when seven persons have to live upon it, it does not go far."

"But what does the father earn,—I mean provided he is industrious?"

"Industrious! God bless you, he has always overworked himself; he is the soberest, steadiest creature alive; and I verily believe, that if he had the promise of obtaining any favour he liked to ask of Heaven, it would be that the day might be made doubly as long as it now is that he might earn bread enough to stop the cries of his starving brats."

"Then the father cannot earn enough if he were to try ever so hard, it seems?"

"Why, the poor man was ill a-bed for three months, and that threw them all behind; his wife's health was quite ruined by the fatigue of nursing him and the severe want she experienced of common necessaries for herself and family. She now lies in a dying state; they have had nothing for all that period besides Louise's wages and what they could obtain from Mother Burette upon the few wretched articles they could dispose of. True, the master for whom Morel had worked advanced them a trifle, out of respect for a man he had always found punctual and honest when he could work. But, la! eight people only to be found in bread, that is what I say,—just imagine how hard it must be to keep life and soul together upon such small means; and if you could only see the hole they are all huddled together in——But do not let us talk any more about that, monsieur, for our dinner is ready, and the very thought of their wretched garret turns my stomach. However, happily, M. Bras Rouge is going to clear the house of them,—when I say happily, I don't mean it ill-naturedly in the least; but since these poor Morels have fallen into such misery, and it is quite out of our power to help them, why let them go and be miserable elsewhere, it will be a heartach the less for us all."

"But, if they are turned out from here, where will they go to?"

"Truly, I don't know."

"And how much can this poor workman earn daily when in health, and without any calls upon his time or attention?"

"Why, if he had not to attend to his old mother, nurse his sick wife,

and look after the five children, he could earn his three or four francs a-day, because he works like a downright slave; but now that, at least, three-quarters of his time are taken up with the family, he can hardly manage to earn forty sous."

"That is little, indeed,—poor creatures!"

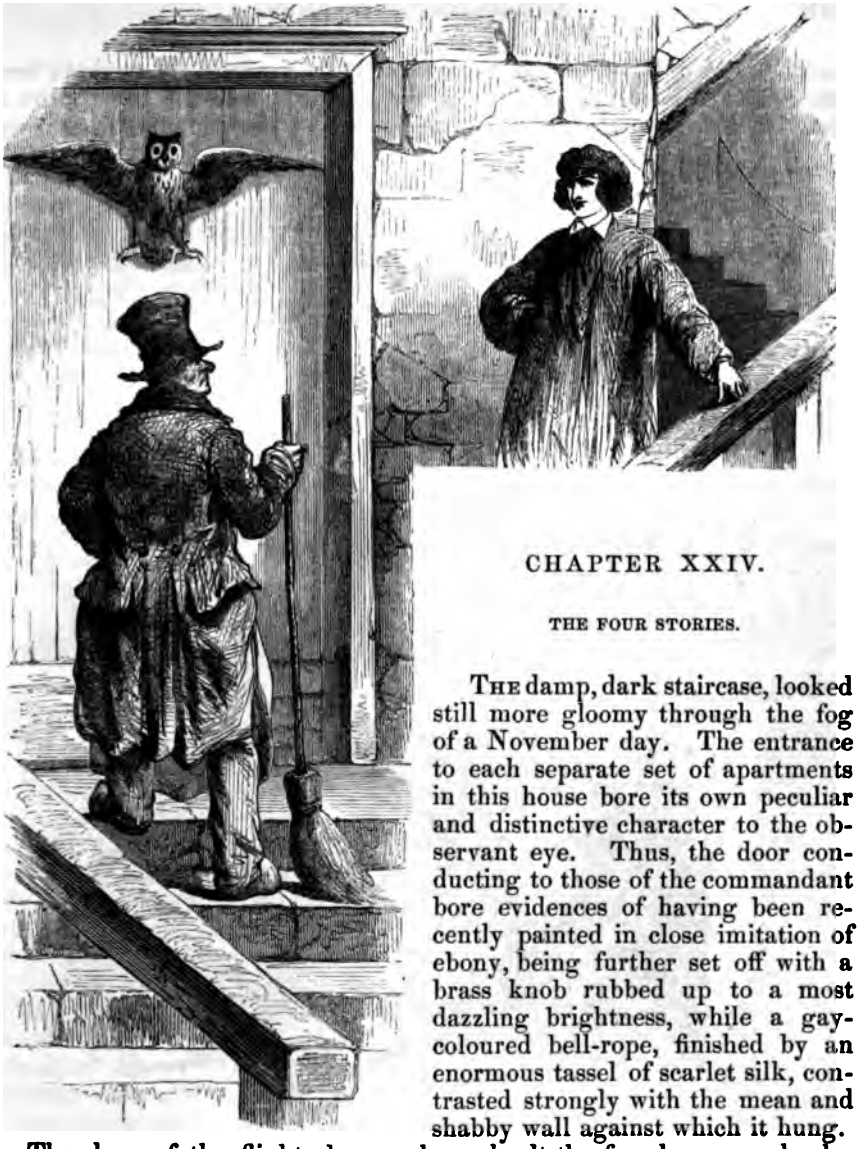
"Yes, it is easy to say poor creatures, but there are so many equally poor creatures, that as we can do nothing for them, it is no use to worry ourselves about it—is it, Alfred? And, talking of consoling ourselves, there stands the cassia, and we have never thought of tasting it."

"To tell you the truth, Madame Pipelet, after what I have just heard I have no inclination to partake of it. You and M. Pipelet must drink my health in it when I am gone."

"You are extremely kind, sir," said the porter; "but will you not like to see the rooms up-stairs?"

"I shall be glad to do so, if perfectly convenient; and, if they suit, I will engage them at once and leave a deposit."

The porter, followed by Rodolph, emerged from the gloomy lodge, and proceeded up stairs.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FOUR STORIES.

The damp, dark staircase, looked still more gloomy through the fog of a November day. The entrance to each separate set of apartments in this house bore its own peculiar and distinctive character to the observant eye. Thus, the door conducting to those of the commandant bore evidences of having been recently painted in close imitation of ebony, being further set off with a brass knob rubbed up to a most dazzling brightness, while a gay-coloured bell-rope, finished by an enormous tassel of scarlet silk, contrasted strongly with the mean and shabby wall against which it hung.

The door of the flight above, where dwelt the female money-lender and dealer in divination, was singularly characterised by the appearance of that mystical symbol of deep wisdom and oracular knowledge, an owl, which, stuffed to resemble life as closely as the artist could contrive it, was nailed on a small bracket just above the doorway; while a sort of small wicket, latticed with wire-work, enabled all visitors to be duly scrutinised ere they were admitted.

The dwelling of the Italian charlatan, who was said to pursue such fearful avocations, had, likewise, its whimsical mode of designating the pursuits of its occupant, whose name, traced in large letters formed of horses' teeth upon a square black board, was nailed to the entrance-door; while, instead of adopting the classical agency of a deer's foot or a hare's

pad for the handle of his bell, there hung dangling from the cord the hand and arm of a dried ape,—the withered limb, the shrivelled hand, with its five fingers, each so distinctly preserved, and the articulation of every

Chamber of Polidori.

joint so clearly defined, the tiny tips bearing the nails long and taper as those of a human creature, presented a close and hideous resemblance to the hand and arm of a child.

As Rodolph passed before a door so singularly indicative of all his worst suspicions, he fancied he could detect the sound of smothered sobs from within. Then rose up a cry so full of agony, of convulsive, irrepressible misery,—a cry as if wrung from a breaking heart or the last wail of expiring nature, that the whole house seemed to re-echo it. Rodolph started: then, by a movement more rapid than thought itself, he rushed to the door and violently pulled the bell.

"What is the matter, sir?" inquired the astonished porter.

"That cry!" said Rodolph; "did you not hear it?"

"Yes, yes, I heard it; I dare say it is some person whose teeth M. Bradamanti is taking out; perhaps he may be taking out several,—and it is painful!"

This explanation, though a probable one, did not satisfy Rodolph as to the horrid scream which still resounded in his ears. Though he had rung the bell with considerable violence, no person had as yet replied to his summons: he could distinctly hear the shutting of several doors, and then, behind a small oval glass let in beside the door, and on which Rodolph had mechanically kept his eye fixed, he saw the haggard, cadaverous countenance of a human being; a mass of reddish hair strongly mixed with grey, and a long beard of the same hue, completed the hideous *ensemble:* the face was seen but for an instant, and vanished as quickly as though it had been a mere creation of fancy, leaving Rodolph in a state of perturbation impossible to describe.

Short as had been the period of this apparition's visit, he had yet in those brief instants recalled features precisely similar and for ever engraven on his memory,—the eyes shining with the colour and brilliancy of the *aqua marina* beneath their bushy sandy eyebrows, the livid complexion, the nose thin, projecting and curving like an eagle's beak, with its nostrils so curiously expanded and carved out till they exposed a portion of the nasal cartilage, resembled closely a certain Polidori, whose name had been so unceremoniously committed by Murphy, in his conversation with Graün, to regions not mentionable to polite ears. Though Rodolph had not seen Polidori during the last sixteen or seventeen years, he had a thousand reasons for keeping every feature well in his remembrance. The only thing that told against the identity of the individual he believed existed under the disguised name of this quack-dentist was the circumstance of his having red hair, while the Polidori of Rodolph's acquaintance had almost black. That Rodolph experienced no wonder (always supposing his conjectures as to the identity correct) at finding a man whose profound learning, rare talent, and vast intelligence he well knew, sunk to such degradation—it might even be infamy, was because he knew equally well that all these high attainments and noble gifts were allied to such entire perversity—such wild and irregular passions, inclinations so corrupt, and, above all, an affected scorn and contempt for the opinion of the world, which might lead this man when want and misery overtook him to seek, from choice, the lowest and least honourable paths of subsistence, and to enjoy a sort of malevolent satisfaction in the idea of him—the talented, the learned, burying all these precious treasures beneath the ignoble calling to which he had devoted his vast powers of mind and body. Still, be it remembered that, spite of the close resemblance between the charlatan surgeon-dentist and the Polidori of bygone years, there still existed discrepancies so great that Rodolph balanced, in deep uncertainty, respecting their proving to be one and the same person.

At length, turning to Pipelet, he inquired,—

"How long has this M. Bradamanti been an inmate of this house?"

"About a year, sir, as nearly as I can remember,—yes, it is a year: I recollect he took the lodgings in the January quarter. Oh! he is a very regular and exact lodger; he cured me of a desperate attack of rheumatism."

"Madame Pipelet was telling me of the reports which are circulated of him."

"How could she be so foolish?"

"Nay, pray do not fear me! I assure you I may safely be trusted."

"But really, sir," rejoined Pipelet, "I do not think there is the least dependence to be placed in such reports. I do not believe them, for one. I never can believe them; my modesty would not let me," added M. Pipelet, turning very red, and preceding his new lodger to the floor above.

The more resolved upon clearing up his doubts in proportion to the very great annoyance he felt that the residence of Polidori in the same house would prove to him, and becoming momentarily more disposed to affix a painful solution to the enigma of the piercing cry he had heard from the apartments of the Italian, Rodolph bound himself by a rigid promise to investigate the matter, so as to place it beyond the power of a doubt, and followed the porter to the upper floor, where was situated the chamber he was desirous of engaging.

It was easy to ascertain the abode of his next-door neighbour, Mademoiselle Rigolette. Thanks to the charming gallantry of the painter,

Cabrion.

Pipelet's mortal foe, the door of her chamber was ornamented after the manner of Watteau, with a panel design representing about half-a-dozen fat, little, chubby Loves, grouped round a space painted sky-blue, and on which was traced, in pink letters, "*Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dressmaker.*" These plump little Cupids had all a task to perform besides encircling this important announcement. One held the thimble of Mademoiselle Rigolette upon his tiny finger; another held her scissors; a third was provided with a smoothing-iron for her use; whilst a fourth held up a mirror, as if to tempt the young sempstress to forsake her work for the more gratifying view of her own pretty countenance. The whole was surrounded with a well-chosen wreath of flowers, whose gay colours contrasted agreeably with the sea-green colour of the door; the whole offering a very unfavourable contrast to the mean and shabby-looking staircase. At the risk of opening anew the bleeding wounds of Alfred, Rodolph ventured to observe, while pointing to the door of Mademoiselle Rigolette,—

"This, I suppose, is the work of M. Cabrion?"

"It is; he destroyed the painting of the door by daubing it over with a parcel of fat indecent children he called his *loves*. Had it not been for the entreaties of Mademoiselle Rigolette, and the weakness of M. Bras Rouge, I would have scratched it all off, as well as this palette filled with horrid monsters, with their equally abominable master, whom you can see drawn amongst them. You may know him by his steeple-crowned hat."

And there, sure enough, on the door of the room Rodolph was about to hire, might be seen a palette surrounded by all kinds of odd and whimsical creatures, the witty conceit of which might have done honour to Callot. Rodolph followed the porter into a tolerably good-sized room, accessible by a small entrance-closet, or antechamber, having two windows opening into the Rue du Temple. Some fantastic sketches from the pencil of M. Cabrion, on the second door, had been scrupulously respected by M. Germain. Rodolph saw too many reasons for desiring to obtain this lodging to hesitate further; therefore, modestly placing a couple of francs in the hand of the porter, he said,—

"This chamber will exactly suit me. Here is a deposit to complete the bargain. To-morrow I will send in my furniture; but let me beg of you not to destroy the merry creatures painted on the palette at the entrance. It is really very droll! Don't you think so?"

"Droll!" groaned poor Pipelet; "not I! Ah, sir! how would you like to dream night after night that you were being hunted by a legion of little ugly devils like these on the door, with Cabrion at their head urging them on, and then fancying you are trying to get away, and cannot? Oh! I have woke all in a perspiration from such dreams hundreds of times since that infamous Cabrion began persecuting me."

"Why, honestly speaking, I cannot say the chase would be a very agreeable one, even though but a dream. However, tell me, have I any need to see M. Bras Rouge—your great man here—about renting this apartment?"

"None whatever, sir. He rarely comes near the place, except when he has any private matters to arrange with Mother Burette. I am the only person to treat with about hiring apartments. I must beg the favour of your name."

"Rodolph."

"Rodolph what?"

"Plain Rodolph, M. Pipelet—nothing more, if you please."

"Just as you please, sir. I did not ask from curiosity. Every man has a right to his own free will, as well as to decide upon the name he chooses to be called."

"What do you think, M. Pipelet, as to the propriety of my going to-morrow, as a new neighbour of Morel's, to inquire whether I can be of any service to them? Since my predecessor, M. Germain, was permitted to assist them according to *his* means, why should they not accept of what trifling help I can afford?"

"Why, sir, I see no harm in your going to call on the Morels, because it may please the poor things; but I hardly see much good it can do, as they are so shortly to be turned out of the house." Then, as if suddenly struck with a new idea, M. Pipelet exclaimed, winking at Rodolph with what he intended should be a very facetious and penetrating look, "I see, I see—you mean to begin making acquaintance with the lodgers at the top of the house, that you may be able to work your way down to Mademoiselle Rigolette. Ah! I've found you out, you see—pretty girl ——"

"Well, I think you have discovered my intentions, so I will confess at once that I mean to try and be on friendly terms with my agreeable neighbour."

"There is no harm in that, sir—it is customary; only all correct, all right and honourable—you understand. Between you and me, I strongly suspect Mademoiselle Rigolette heard us coming up-stairs, and that she is watching to have a look as we go down. I will make a noise purposely in locking the door; if you look sharp, you will see her as we pass the landing." And, true to the porter's suspicions, the door so tastefully enlivened by the fat Cupids, *à la Watteau*, was seen to open gently, and Rodolph had a brief view of a little turned-up nose, and a pair of large, staring black eyes, peeping through the narrow space; but, as he slackened his steps, the door was hastily shut. "I told you she was watching us," said the porter. Then added, "Excuse me one instant, sir; I want to step up to my warehouse."

"Where is that?"

"At the top of this ladder is the landing-place, on which the door of Morel's garret opens, and in the wainscoting of this landing is a small dark cupboard, where I keep my leather, and the wall is so full of cracks, that when I am in this hole I can see and hear every thing, the same as if I was in Morel's room. Not that I wish to spy what the poor creatures are about, God knows—quite the contrary. But please to excuse me for a few minutes, sir, whilst I fetch my bit of leather. If you will have the goodness to go down stairs, I will rejoin you."

And, so saying, Pipelet commenced ascending the steep ladder communicating with his *warehouse*, as he styled it—a somewhat perilous feat for a person of his age.

Rodolph, thus left alone, cast another glance towards the chamber of Mademoiselle Rigolette, remembering with deep interest all he had heard of her being the favourite companion of the poor Goualeuse, and recalling also the information she was said to possess touching the residence of the Schoolmaster's son, when the sound of some person quitting the apartments of the quack-doctor below attracted his attention, and he could distinctly hear the light step of a female, with the rustling of a silk dress. Rodolph paused till the sounds had died away, and then descended the stairs. Something white had fallen about half-way down; it had evidently been dropped by the person who had just quitted Polidori. Rodolph picked it up, and carried it to one of the narrow windows which lighted the staircase. It was a pocket-handkerchief, of the finest cambric, trimmed with costly lace, and bearing in one corner the initials "L. N." beautifully embroidered, and surmounted with a ducal coronet. The handkerchief was literally soaked in tears.

Rodolph's first impulse was to follow the person from whose hand this mute evidence of deep woe had fallen, with the view of restoring it, but, reflecting that such a step might be mistaken for impertinent curiosity, he determined to preserve it carefully, as the first link in an adventure he found himself almost involuntarily engaged, and from which he augured a painful and melancholy termination. As he returned to the porteress, he inquired whether a female had not just come down stairs.

"A *female!*—No, indeed, sir—it was a fine, tall, slender-looking lady, not a female, and covered over with a thick black veil. She has come from M. Bradamanti. Little Tortillard fetched a coach for her, and she has just driven away in it. What struck me was the impudence of that little beggar to seat himself behind the coach. I dare say, though, it was to see where the lady went to, for he is as mischievous as a magpie, and as prying as a ferret, for all his club-foot."

"So then," thought Rodolph, "the name and address of this unhappy lady will soon be known to this impostor, since it is, doubtless, by his directions she is followed and watched by this imp of an emissary."

"Well, sir, and what do you think of the apartment? will it suit you?" inquired Madame Pipelet.

"Nothing could have suited me better. I have taken it, and to-morrow I shall send in my furniture."

"Well, then, thank God for a good lodger! I am sure it was a lucky chance for us sent you here."

"I hope you will find it so, madam. I think it is well understood

between us that you undertake to manage all my little domestic matters for me. I shall come and superintend the removal of my goods. Adieu!"

So saying, Rodolph left the lodge. The results of his visit to the house in the Rue du Temple were highly important, both as regarded the solution of the deep mystery he so ardently desired to unravel, and also as affording a wide field for the exercise of his earnest endeavours to do good and to prevent evil. After mature calculation, he considered himself to have achieved the following results:—

First, he had ascertained that Mademoiselle Rigolette was in possession of the address of Germain, the Schoolmaster's son. Secondly, a young female, who, from appearances, might unhappily be the Marquise d'Harville, had made an appointment with the commandant for the morrow,—perhaps to her own utter ruin and disgrace; and Rodolph had (as we have before mentioned) numerous reasons for wishing to preserve the honour and peace of one for whom he felt so lively an interest, as he took in all concerning M. d'Harville. An honest and industrious artisan, crushed by the deepest misery, was, with his whole family, about to be turned into the streets through the means of Bras Rouge. Further, Rodolph had undesignedly caught a glimpse of an adventure in which the charlatan Cæsar Bradamanti (possibly Polidori) and a female, evidently of rank and fashion, were the principal actors. And, finally, La Chouette, having lately quitted the hospital, where she had been since the affair in the Allée des Veuves, had reappeared on the stage, and was evidently engaged in some underhand proceedings with the fortune-teller and female money-lender who occupied the second floor of the house.

Having carefully noted down all these particulars, Rodolph returned to his house, Rue Plumet, deferring till the following day his visit to the notary, Jacques Ferrand.

It will be no doubt fresh in the memory of our readers, that on this same evening Rodolph was engaged to be present at a grand ball given by the ambassador of ——. Before following our hero in this new excursion, let us cast a retrospective glance on Tom and Sarah,—personages of the greatest importance in the developement of this history.

CHAPTER XXV.

TOM AND SARAH.

Sarah Seyton, widow of Count Macgregor, and at this time thirty-six or thirty-seven years of age, was of an excellent Scotch family, daughter of a baronet, and a country gentleman. Beautiful and accomplished, an orphan at seventeen years old, she had left Scotland with her brother, Thomas Seyton of Halsbury. The absurd predictions of an old Highland

nurse had excited almost to madness the two leading vices in Sarah's character—pride and ambition: the destiny predicted for her, and in which she fully believed, was of the highest order,—in fact, sovereign rank. The prophecy had been so often repeated, that the young Scotch girl eventually fully credited its fulfilment; and she constantly repeated

to herself, to bear out her ambitious dream, that a fortune-teller had thus promised a crown to the handsome and excellent creature who afterwards sat on the throne of France, and who was queen as much by her graces and her kind heart as others have been by their grandeur and majesty.

Strange to say, Thomas Seyton, as superstitious as his sister, encouraged her foolish hopes, and resolved on devoting his life to the realisation of Sarah's dream,—a dream as dazzling as it was deceptive. However, the brother and sister were not so blind as to believe implicitly in this Highland prophecy, and to look absolutely for a throne of the first rank in a splendid disdain of secondary royalties or reigning principalities; on the contrary, so that the handsome Scotch lassie should one day encircle her imperial forehead with a sovereign crown, the haughty pair agreed to condescend to shut their eyes to the importance of the throne they coveted. By the assistance of the *Almanach de Gotha* for the year of grace 1819, Seyton arranged, before he left Scotland, a sort of synopsis of the ages of all the kings and ruling powers in Europe then unmarried.

Although very ridiculous, yet the brother and sister's ambition was freed from all shameful modes: Seyton was prepared to aid his sister Sarah in snatching at the thread of the conjugal band by which she hoped eventually to fasten a crown upon her brows. He would be her participator in any and all stratagems which could tend to consummate this end; but he would rather have killed his sister than see her the mistress of a prince, even though the *liaison* should terminate in a marriage of reparation.

The matrimonial inventory that resulted from Seyton and Sarah's researches in the *Almanach de Gotha* was satisfactory. The Germanic Confederation furnished forth a numerous contingent of young presumptive sovereigns. Seyton was not ignorant of the sort of German wedlock which is called a "left-handed marriage," to which, as being legitimate to a certain extent, he would, as a last resource, have resigned his sister. To Germany, then, it was resolved to bend their steps, in order to commence this search for a royal spouse.

If the project appears improbable, such hopes ridiculous, let us first reply by saying that unbridled ambition, excited by superstitious belief, rarely claims for itself the light of reason in its enterprises, and will dare the wildest impossibilities; yet, when we recall certain events, even in our own times, from high and most reputable *morganatic* marriages between sovereigns and female subjects, down to the loving elopement of Miss Penelope Smith and the Prince of Capua, we cannot refuse some chance of fortunate result to the imagination of Seyton and Sarah. Let us add that the lady united to a very lovely person singular abilities and very varied talents; whilst there were added a power of seduction the more dangerous as it was united to a mind unbending and calculating, a disposition cunning and selfish, a deep hypocrisy, a stubborn and despotic will,—all covered by the outward show of a generous, warm, and impassioned nature.

In her appearance, there was as much deceit as in her mind. Her full and dark eyes, now sparkling, now languishing, beneath her coal-black brow, could well dissimulate all the warmth of love and desire. Yet the burning impulses of love never throbbed beneath her icy bosom: no surprise of the heart or of the senses ever intervened to disturb the cold and pitiless calculations of this woman—crafty, selfish, and ambitious. When she reached the Continent, she resolved, in accordance with her

brother's advice, not to commence her conjugal and regal campaign until she had resided some time in Paris, where she determined to complete her education, and rub off the rust of her native country, by associating with a society which was embellished by all that was elegant, tasteful, and refined. Sarah was introduced into the best society and the highest circles, thanks to the letters of recommendation and considerate patronage of the English "ambassador's" lady and the old Marquis d'Harville, who had known Tom and Sarah's father in England.

Persons of deceitful, calculating, and cold dispositions, acquire with great facility language and manners quite in opposition to their natural character, as with them all is outside, surface, appearance, varnish, bark; or they soon find that, if their real characters are detected, they are undone: so, thanks to the sort of instinct of self-preservation with which they are gifted, they feel all the necessity of the moral mask, and so paint and costume themselves with all the alacrity and skill of a practised comedian. Thus, after six months' residence in Paris, Sarah was in a condition to contest with the most Parisian of Parisian women, as to the piquant finish of her wit, the charm of her liveliness, the ingenuousness of her flirtation, and the exciting simplicity of her looks, at once chaste and passionate.

Finding his sister in full panoply for his campaign, Seyton left with her for Germany, furnished with the best letters of introduction. The first state of the German Confederation which headed Sarah's "road-

book" was the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein, thus styled in the diplomatic and infallible *Almanach de Gotha* for the year of grace 1819.

Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe and their Families.

"GEROLSTEIN.

"Grand Duke: MAXIMILIAN RODOLPH, 10th December, 1764. Succeeded his father, CHARLES FREDERIC RODOLPH, 21st April, 1785. Widower January 1808, by decease of his wife, LOUISA AMELIA, daughter of JOHN AUGUSTUS, Prince of BURGLEN.

"*Son:* GUSTAVUS RODOLPH, born 17th April, 1803.

"*Mother:* Dowager Grand Duchess JUDITH, widow of the Grand Duke, CHARLES FREDERIC RODOLPH, 21st April, 1785."

Seyton, with much practical good sense, had first noted down on his list the youngest princes whom he coveted as brothers-in-law, thinking that extreme youth is more easily seduced than ripened age. Moreover, we have already said that the brother and sister were particularly recommended to the reigning Duke of Gerolstein by the old Marquis d'Harville, caught, like the rest of the world, by Sarah, whose beauty, grace, and, above all, delightful manners, he could not sufficiently admire.

It is superfluous to say that the presumptive heir of the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein was *Gustavus* RODOLPH: he was hardly eighteen when Tom and Sarah were presented to his father. The arrival of the young Scotch lady was an event in the German court, so quiet, simple, and almost patriarchal in its habits and observances. The Grand Duke, a most worthy gentleman, governed his states with wise firmness and paternal kindness. Nothing could exceed the actual and moral happiness of the principality, whose laborious and steady population, by their soberness and piety, presented a pure specimen of the German character. This excellent people enjoyed so much real felicity, and were so perfectly contented with their condition, that the enlightened care of the Grand Duke was not much called into action to preserve them from the mania of *constitutional* innovations. As far as modern discovery went, and those practical suggestions which have a wholesome influence over the well-being and morals of his people, the Grand Duke was always anxious to acquire knowledge himself, and apply it invariably for the use and benefit of his people, his residents at the capitals of the different states of Europe having little else to occupy themselves whilst on their mission but to keep their master fully informed as to the rise and progress of science and all the arts which are connected with public welfare and public utility.

We have said that the Duke felt as much affection as gratitude for the old Marquis d'Harville, who, in 1815, had rendered him immense service; and so, thanks to his powerful recommendation, Sarah of Halsbury and her brother were received at the court of Gerolstein with every distinction, and with marked kindness. A fortnight after her arrival, the young Scotch girl, endued with so profound a spirit of observation, had easily penetrated the firm character and open heart of the Grand Duke. Before she began to seduce his son,—a thing of course,—she had wisely resolved to discover the disposition of the father. Although he appeared to dote on his son, she was yet fully convinced that this father, with all his tenderness, would never swerve from certain principles, certain ideas as to the duty of princes, and would never consent to

what he would consider a *més-alliance* for his son, and that not through pride, but from conscience, reason, and dignity. A man of this firm mould, and the more affectionate and good in proportion as he is firm and determined, never abates one jot of that which affects his conscience, his reason, and his dignity.

Sarah was on the point of renouncing her enterprise in the face of obstacles so insurmountable; but, reflecting that, as Rodolph was very young, and his gentleness and goodness, his character at once timid and meditative, were generally spoken of, she thought she might find compensation in the feeble and irresolute disposition of the young prince, and therefore persisted in her project, and again revived her hopes.

On this new essay, the management of herself and brother were most masterly. The young lady knew full well how to propitiate all around her, and particularly the persons who might have been jealous or envious of her accomplishments, and she caused her beauty and grace to be forgotten beneath the veil of modest simplicity with which she covered them. She soon became the idol, not only of the Grand Duke, but of his mother, the Dowager Grand Duchess Judith, who, in spite of, or through, her ninety years of age, loved to excess every thing that was young and charming.

Sarah and her brother often talked of their departure, but the sovereign of Gerolstein would never consent to it; and that he might completely attach the two to him, he pressed on Sir Thomas Seyton the acceptance of the vacant post of his "first groom of the chamber," and entreated Sarah not to quit the Grand Duchess Judith, as she could not do without her. After much hesitation, overcome by the most pressing entreaties, Sarah and Seyton accepted such brilliant offers, and decided on establishing themselves at the court of Gerolstein, where they had been for two months.

Sarah, who was an accomplished musician, knowing the taste of the

Grand Duchess for the old masters, and, above all, for Gluck, sent for the *chef-d'œuvre* of this attractive composer, and fascinated the old princess by her unfailing complaisance, as well as the remarkable skill with which she sang those old airs, so beautiful in their melody, so expressive in their character.

As for Seyton, he knew how to make himself very useful in the occupation which had been conferred upon him. He was a good judge of horses, was orderly and firm in his conduct and arrangements, and so, in a short time, completely remodelled the stables of the Grand Duke, which, up to that time, had been neglected, and become disorganised.

The brother and sister were soon equally beloved, fêted, and admired in this court. The master's preference soon commands the preference of those below him. Sarah required, in aid of her future projects, too much aid not to employ her insinuating powers in acquiring partisans. Her hypocrisy, clothed in most attractive shapes, easily deluded the simple-hearted Germans, and the general feeling soon authorised the extreme kindness of the Grand Duke.

Thus, then, our designing pair were established at the court of Gerolstein, agreeably and securely placed without any reference to Rodolph. By a lucky chance, some days after the arrival of Sarah, the young prince had gone away to the inspection of troops, with an aide-de-camp and the faithful Murphy. This absence, doubly auspicious to the views of Sarah, allowed her to arrange at her ease the principal threads of the fillet she was weaving, without being deterred by the presence of the young prince, whose too open admiration might, perhaps, have awakened the suspicions of the Grand Duke. On the contrary, in the absence of his son, he did not, unfortunately, reflect that he was admitting into the closest intimacy a young girl of surpassing beauty and of lively wit, as Rodolph must discover at every moment of the day.

Sarah was perfectly insensible to a reception so kind and generous—to the full confidence with which she was introduced into the very heart of this sovereign family. Neither brother nor sister paused for a moment in their bad designs; they determined upon a principle to bring trouble and annoyance into this peaceable and happy court; they calmly calculated the probable results of the cruel divisions they should establish between a father and son up to that period so tenderly united.

* * * * * *

A few words concerning Rodolph's early days may be necessary. During his infancy, he had been extremely delicate. His father reasoned thereon in this strange manner. English country gentlemen are generally remarkable for their robust health. This advantage results generally from their bodily training, which is simple, rural, and developes their full vigour. Rodolph must leave the hands of women; his temperament is delicate, and, perhaps, by accustoming this child to live like the son of an English farmer (with some few exceptions), I shall strengthen his constitution.

The Grand Duke sent to England for a man worthy of the trust, and capable of directing such a course of bodily culture, and Sir Walter Murphy, an athletic specimen of a Yorkshire country gentleman, was entrusted with this important charge. The direction which he gave to the mind and body of the young prince were such as entirely coincided with the views and wishes of the Grand Duke. Murphy and his pupil

lived for many years in a beautiful farm-house, situated in the midst of woods and fields, some leagues from the capital of Gerolstein, and in a most picturesque and salubrious spot. Rodolph, free from all etiquette, and employed with Murphy in out-door labour proportionate to his age, lived the sober, manly, and regular life of the country, having for his pleasure and amusement the violent exercises of wrestling, pugilism, riding on horseback, and hunting. In the midst of the pure air of the

meadows, woods, and mountains, he underwent an entire change, and grew up as vigorous as a young oak; his pale cheek became suffused with the ruddy glow of health; always lithe and active, he underwent now the most severe fatigues, his address, energy, and courage supplying what was deficient in his muscular power; so that, when only in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, he was always the conqueror in his contests with young men his superiors in age.

His scientific education necessarily suffered from the preference given to his physical training, and Rodolph's knowledge was very limited; but the Grand Duke very wisely reflected that, to have a well-informed mind, it must be supported by a strong physical frame, and that, this acquired, the intellectual faculties would develope themselves the more rapidly.

The kind Walter Murphy was by no means a sage, and could only convey to Rodolph some primary instruction; but no one knew better than he how to inspire his pupil with the feeling of what is just, loyal, and generous, and a horror of every thing that was mean, low, and contemptible. These repugnances, these powerful and wholesome admonitions, took deep and lasting root in the very soul of Rodolph; and although, in after life, these principles were violently shaken by the storm of passions, yet they were never eradicated from his heart. The levin bolt strikes, splits, and rends the deeply-planted tree; but the sap still maintains its hold in the roots, and a thousand green branches spring fresh from what was taken for a withered and dead tree.

Murphy, then, gave to Rodolph, if we may use the expression, health

to both body and mind; he made him robust, active, and daring, with a love for all that was good and right, and a hatred for whatsoever was wicked and bad. Having fulfilled his task to admiration, the squire, called to England on very important business, left Germany for some time, to the great regret of Rodolph, who loved him extremely.

His son's health having been so satisfactorily established, the Grand Duke turned his most serious attention to the mental education of his dearly-beloved son. A certain Doctor Cæsar Polidori, a renowned linguist, a distinguished chemist, learned historian, and deeply versed in the study of all the exact and physical sciences, was entrusted with the charge of cultivating and improving the rich but virgin soil so carefully and well prepared by Murphy. This time the Grand Duke's choice was a most unfortunate one, or, rather, his religious feelings were infamously imposed upon by the person who introduced the Doctor to him, and caused him to think on Polidori as the preceptor of the young prince. Atheist, cheat, and hypocrite, full of stratagem and trick, concealing the most dangerous immorality, the most hardened scepticism, under an austere exterior, profoundly versed in the knowledge of human nature, or, rather, only having tried the worst side—the disgraceful passions of humanity—Doctor Polidori was the most hateful Mentor that could have been entrusted with the education of a young man.

Rodolph left with the deepest regrets the independent and animating life which he had hitherto led with Murphy to go and become pale with the study of books, and submit himself to the irksome ceremonies of his father's court, and he at once entertained a strong prejudice against his tutor. It could not be otherwise.

On quitting his young friend, the poor squire had compared him, and with justice, to a young wild colt, full of grace and fire, carried off from his native prairies, where he had dwelt, free as air, and joyous as a bird, to be bridled and spurred, that he might under that system learn how to moderate and economise those powers which, hitherto, he had only employed in running and leaping in any way he pleased.

Rodolph began by telling Polidori that he had no taste for study, but that he greatly preferred the free exercise of his arms and legs, to breathe the pure air of the fields, to traverse the woods and the mountains, and that a good horse and a good gun were preferable to all the books in the universe. The Doctor was prepared for this antipathy, and was secretly delighted at it, for, in another way, the hopes of this man were as ambitious as those of Sarah. Although the grand-duchy of Gerolstein was only a secondary state, Polidori indulged the idea of being one day its Richelieu, and of making Rodolph play the part of the do-nothing prince. But, desirous above all things of currying favour with his pupil, and of making him forget Murphy, by his own concession and compliance, he concealed from the Grand Duke the young prince's repugnance for study, and boasted of his application to, and rapid progress in, his studies; whilst some examinations arranged between himself and Rodolph, which had the air of being impromptu questions, confirmed the Grand Duke in his blind and implicit confidence. By degrees, the dislike which Rodolph at first entertained for the Doctor changed, on the young prince's part, into a cool familiarity, very unlike the real attachment he had for Murphy. By degrees, he found himself leagued with Polidori (although from very

innocent causes) by the same ties that unite two guilty persons. Sooner or later, Rodolph was sure to despise a man of the age and character of the Doctor, who so unworthily lied to excuse the idleness of his pupil. This Polidori knew; but he also knew that if we do not at once sever our connexions with corrupt minds in disgust, by degrees, and in spite of our better reason, we become familiar with and too frequently admire them, until, insensibly, we hear without shame or reproach those things mocked at and vituperated which we formerly loved and revered. Besides, the Doctor was too cunning all at once to shock certain noble sentiments and convictions which Rodolph had derived from the admirable lessons of Murphy. After having vented much raillery on the coarseness of the early occupations of his young pupil, the Doctor, laying aside his thin mask of austerity, had greatly aroused the curiosity and heated the fancy of the young prince, by exaggerated descriptions, strongly drawn and deeply coloured, of the pleasures and gallantries which had *illustrated* the reigns of Louis XIV., the Regent, and especially Louis XV., the hero of Cæsar Polidori. He assured the misled boy, who listened to him with a fatal earnestness, that pleasures, however excessive, far from demoralising a highly accomplished prince, often made him merciful and generous, inasmuch as fine minds are never more predisposed to benevolence and clemency than when acted upon by their own enjoyments. Louis XV. the *bien aimé*, the *well-beloved*, was an unanswerable proof of this. And then, added the Doctor, how entirely have the greatest men of all ages and all countries abandoned themselves to the most refined epicureanism—from Alcibiades to Maurice of Saxony, from Anthony to the great Condé, from Cæsar to Vendôme! Such conversations must make deep and dangerous impressions on a young, ardent, and virgin mind, and such theories could not be without their results.

In the midst of this well regulated and virtuous court, accustomed, after the example of its ruler, to honest pleasures and harmless amusements, Rodolph, instructed by Polidori, dreamt of the dissipated nights of Versailles, the orgies of Choisy, the attractive voluptuousness of the Parc-au-Cerfs, and also, from time to time, of some romantic amours contrasting with these. Neither had the Doctor failed to prove to Rodolph that a prince of the Germanic Confederation should not have any military pretension beyond sending his contingent to the Diet. The feeling of the time was not warlike. According to the Doctor, to pass his time delightfully and idly amongst women and the refinements of luxury,—to repose from time to time from the animation of sensual pleasures, amidst the delightful attractions of the fine arts,—to hunt occasionally, not as a Nimrod, but as an intelligent epicurean, and enjoy the transitory fatigues which make idleness and repose taste but the sweeter,—this, this was the only life which a prince should think of enjoying, who (and this was his height of happiness) could find a prime minister capable of devoting himself boldly to the distressing and overwhelming burden of state affairs.

Rodolph, in abandoning himself to ideas which were free from criminality, because they did not spring from the circle of fatal probabilities, resolved that when Providence should call to himself the Grand Duke, his father, he would devote himself to the life which Cæsar Polidori had painted to him under such brilliant and attractive colours, and to have as his prime minister one whose knowledge and understanding he admired,

and whose blind complaisance he fully appreciated. It is useless to say that the young prince kept the most perfect silence upon the subject of those pernicious hopes which had been excited within him. Knowing that the heroes of the Grand Duke's admiration were Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII., and the great Frederic (Maximilian Rodolph had the honour of belonging to the royal house of Brandenburg), Rodolph thought, reasonably enough, that the prince, his father, who professed so profound an admiration for these king-captains, always booted and spurred, continually mounted on their chargers, and engaged in making war, would consider his son out of his senses if he believed him capable of wishing to displace the Tudescan gravity of his court by the introduction of the light and licentious manners of the Regency.

A year—eighteen months—passed away. At the end of this time Murphy returned from England, and wept for joy on again embracing his young pupil. After a few days, although unable to discover the reason of a change which so deeply afflicted him, the worthy squire found Rodolph chilled and constrained in his demeanour towards him, and almost rude when he recalled to him his sequestered and rural life. Assured of the natural kind heart of the young prince, and warned by a secret presentiment, Murphy thought him for a time perverted by the pernicious influence of Doctor Polidori, whom he instinctively abhorred, and resolved to watch very narrowly. The Doctor, for his part, was very much annoyed by Murphy's return, for he feared his frankness, good sense, and keen penetration. He instantly resolved, therefore, cost what it might, to ruin the worthy Englishman in Rodolph's estimation. It was at this crisis that Seyton and Sarah were presented and received at the court of Gerolstein with such extreme distinction. We have said that Rodolph, accompanied by Murphy, had been absent from the court on a journey for some weeks. During this absence the Doctor was by no means idle. It is said that intriguers discover and recognise each other by certain mysterious signs, which allow of them observing each other until their interests decide them to form a close alliance, or declare unremitting hostility.

Some days after the establishment of Sarah and her brother at the court of the Grand Duke, Polidori became a close ally of Seyton's. The Doctor confessed to himself, with delectable cynocism, that he felt a natural affinity for rogues and villains, and so he said that, without pretending to discover the end which Sarah and her brother desired to achieve, he was attracted towards them by a sympathy so strong, as to lead him to imagine that they plotted some devilish purpose. Some questions of Seyton's as to the disposition and early life of Rodolph, questions which would have passed without notice with a person less awake to all that occurred than the Doctor, in a moment enlightened him as to the ulterior aims of the brother and sister; all he doubted was, that the aspirations of the Scotch lady were at the same time honourable as well as ambitious. The arrival of this lovely young woman appeared to Polidori a godsend. Rodolph's mind was already inflamed with amorous imaginings; Sarah might become, or be made, the delicious reality which should substantiate so many glorious dreams. It was not to be doubted but that she would secure an immense influence over a heart submitted to the witching spell of a first-love. The Doctor instantly laid his plan to direct and secure this influence, and to make it serve also

as the means of destroying Murphy's power and reputation. Like a skilful intriguer, he soon informed the aspiring pair that they must come to an understanding with him, as he alone was responsible to the Grand Duke for the private life of the young prince.

Sarah and her brother understood him in a moment, although they had not told the Doctor a syllable of their secret designs. On the return of Rodolph and Murphy, all three, combined by one common intent, tacitly leagued against the squire, their most redoubtable enemy.

* * * * * *

What was to happen did happen. Rodolph saw Sarah daily after his return, and became desperately enamoured. She soon told him that she shared his love, although she foresaw that this love would create great trouble. He could never be happy; the distance that separated them was too wide! She then recommended to Rodolph the most profound discretion, for fear of arousing the Grand Duke's suspicions, as he would be inexorable, and deprive them of their only happiness—that of seeing each other every day. The young prince promised to be cautious, and

conceal his love. The Scotch maiden was too ambitious, too self-possessed, to compromise and betray herself in the eyes of the court; and Rodolph, perceiving the necessity of dissimulation, imitated Sarah's prudence. The lovers' secret was carefully preserved for some time; nor was it until the brother and sister saw the unbridled passion of their dupe reach its utmost excess, and that his infatuation, which he could hardly restrain, threatened to burst forth afresh, and destroy all, that they resolved on their final *coup*. The Doctor's character, authorising the confidence, besides the morality which invested it, Seyton opened to him on the necessity of a marriage between Rodolph and Sarah, otherwise, he added, with perfect sincerity, he and his sister would instantly leave Gerolstein. Sarah participated in the prince's affection, but, preferring death to dishonour, she could only be the wife of his highness.

This exalted flight of ambition stupified the Doctor, who had never imagined that Sarah's imagination soared so high. A marriage surrounded by numberless difficulties and dangers appeared impossible to Polidori, and he frankly told Seyton the reasons why the Grand Duke would never submit to such an union. Seyton agreed in the importance of the reasons, but proposed, as a *mezzo termini* which should meet all objections, a marriage, which, although secret, should be legal, and only avowed after the decease of the Grand Duke. Sarah was of a noble and ancient house, and such an union was not without precedent. Seyton gave the prince eight days to decide; his sister could not longer endure the cruel anguish of uncertainty, and, if she must renounce Rodolph's love, she must act up to her painful resolve as promptly as might be.

Certain that he could not mistake Sarah's views, the Doctor was sorely perplexed. He had three ways before him,—to inform the Grand Duke of the matrimonial project, to open Rodolph's eyes as to the manœuvres of Tom and Sarah, to lend himself to the marriage. But to inform the Grand Duke would be to alienate from him for ever the heir presumptive to the throne. To enlighten Rodolph on the interested views of Sarah was to expose himself to the reception which a lover is sure to give when she whom he loves is depreciated in his eyes; and then, what a blow for the vanity or the heart of the young prince, to let him know that it was for his royal rank alone that the lady was desirous to wed him! On the other hand, by lending himself to this match, Polidori bound Rodolph and Sarah to him by a tie of the strongest gratitude, or, at least, by the complicity of a dangerous act. No doubt, all might be discovered, and the Doctor exposed to the anger of the Grand Duke, but then the marriage would have been concluded, the union legal. The storm would blow over, and the future sovereign of Gerolstein would become the more bound to Polidori, in proportion as the Doctor had undergone greater dangers in his service. After much consideration, therefore, he resolved on serving Sarah, but with a certain qualification, which we will presently refer to.

Rodolph's passion had reached a height almost of frenzy. Violently excited by constraint, and the skilful management of Sarah, who pretended to feel still more than he did the insurmountable obstacles which honour and duty placed between them and their liberty, in a few days more the young prince would have betrayed himself. Thus, when the Doctor proposed that he must never see his enchantress again, or possess her by

a secret marriage, Rodolph threw himself on Polidori's neck, called him his saviour, his friend, his father; he only wished that the temple and the priest were at hand, that he might marry her that instant. The Doctor resolved (for *reasons of his own*) to undertake the management of all. He found a priest—witnesses; and the union (all the formalities of which were carefully scrutinised and verified by Seyton) was secretly celebrated during a temporary absence of the Grand Duke at a conference of the Germanic Diet. The prophecy of the Scotch soothsayer was fulfilled—Sarah wedded the heir to a throne.

Without quenching the fire of his love, possession rendered Rodolph more circumspect, and cooled down that violence which might have compromised the secret of his passion for Sarah; but, directed by Seyton and the Doctor, the young couple managed so well, and observed so much circumspection towards each other, that they eluded all detection.

An event, impatiently desired by Sarah, soon turned this calm into a tempest—she was about to become a mother. It was then that this woman evinced all those exactions which were so new to, and so much astonished, Rodolph. She protested, with hypocritical tears streaming from her eyes, that she could no longer support the constraint in which she lived; a constraint rendered the more insupportable by her pregnancy. In this extremity she boldly proposed to the young prince to tell all to his father, who was, as well as the Dowager Grand Duchess, fonder than ever of her. No doubt, she added, he will be very angry, greatly enraged, at first, but he loves his son so tenderly, so blindly, and had for her (Sarah) so strong an affection, that his paternal anger would gradually subside, and she would at last take in the court of Gerolstein the rank which was due to her, she might say in a double sense, because she was about to give birth to a child, which would be the heir presumptive to the Grand Duke. These pretensions alarmed Rodolph: he knew the deep attachment which his father had for him, but he also well knew the inflexibility of his principles with regard to all the duties of a prince. To all these objections Sarah replied, unmoved,—

"I am your wife, in the presence of God and men. In a short time, I shall no longer be able to conceal my situation; and I ought not to

blush at that of which I am, on the contrary, so proud, and would desire openly to acknowledge."

The expectation of posterity had redoubled Rodolph's tenderness for Sarah, and, placed between the desire to accede to her wishes and the dread of his father's wrath, he experienced the bitterest anguish. Seyton sided with his sister.

"The marriage is indissoluble," said he to his royal brother-in-law; "the Grand Duke may exile you from his court—you and your wife, nothing more; but he loves you too much to have recourse to such an extremity. He will endure what he cannot prevent."

These reasons, strong enough in themselves, did not soothe Rodolph's anxieties. At this juncture, Seyton was charged by the Grand Duke with an errand to visit several breeding studs in Austria. This mission, which he could not refuse, would only detain him about a fortnight: he set out with much regret, and in a very important moment for his sister. She was chagrined, yet satisfied, at the departure of her brother, for she would lose his advice; but then he would be safe from the Grand Duke's anger if all were discovered. Sarah promised to keep Seyton fully informed, day by day, of the progress of events, so important to both of them; and, that they might correspond more surely and secretly, they agreed upon a cypher, of which Polidori also held the key. This precaution alone proves that Sarah had other matters to tell her brother of besides her love for Rodolph. In truth, this selfish, cold, ambitious woman had not felt the ice of her heart melt even by the beams of the passionate love which had been breathed to her. Her maternity was only with her a means of acting more effectually on Rodolph, and had no softening effect on her iron soul. The youth, headlong love, and inexperience of the prince, who was hardly more than a child, and so perfidiously ensnared into an inextricable position, hardly excited an interest in the mind of this selfish creature; and, in her confidential communications with him, she complained, with disdain and bitterness, of the weakness of this young man, who trembled before the most paternal of German princes, *who lived, however, very long!* In a word, this correspondence between the brother and sister clearly developed their unbounded selfishness, their ambitious calculations, their impatience, which almost amounted to homicide, and laid bare the springs of that dark conspiracy crowned by the marriage of Rodolph. One of Sarah's letters to her brother was abstracted by Polidori, the channel of their mutual communications; for what purpose, we shall see hereafter.

A few days after Seyton's departure, Sarah was at the evening court of the Dowager Grand Duchess. Many of the ladies present looked at her with an astonished air, and whispered to their neighbours. The Grand Duchess Judith, in spite of her ninety years, had a quick ear and a sharp eye, and this little whispering did not escape her. She made a sign to one of the ladies in waiting to come to her, and from her she learned that every body was remarking that the figure of Miss Sarah Seyton of Halsbury was less slender, less delicate in its proportions, than usual. The old princess adored her young *protégée*, and would have answered to God himself for Sarah's virtue. Indignant at the malevolence of these remarks, she shrugged her shoulders, and said aloud, from the end of the saloon in which she was sitting,—

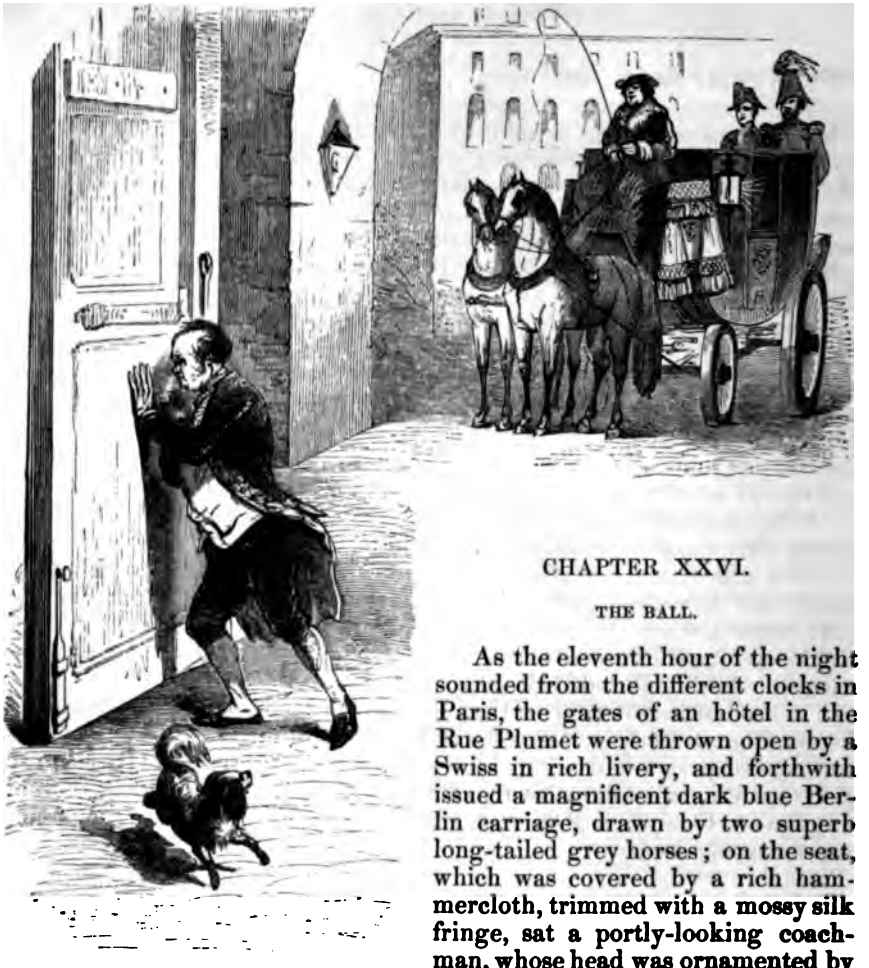
"My dear Sarah, come here."

Sarah rose. It was requisite to cross the circle to reach the place where the princess was seated, who was anxious most kindly to destroy the rumour that was circulated, and, by the simple fact of thus crossing the room, confound her calumniators, and prove triumphantly that the fair proportions of her *protégée* had lost not one jot of their symmetry and delicacy. Alas! the most perfidious enemy could not have devised a better plan than that suggested by the worthy princess in her desire to defend her *protégée*. Sarah came towards her, and it required all the deep respect due to the Grand Duchess to repress the murmur of surprise and indignation when the young lady crossed the room. The nearest-sighted persons saw what Sarah *would no longer conceal*, for her pregnancy might have been hidden longer had she but have chosen; but the ambitious woman had sought this display in order to compel Rodolph to declare his marriage. The Grand Duchess, who, however, would not be convinced in spite of her eye-sight, said, in a low voice, to Sarah,—

"My dear child, how very ill you have dressed yourself to-day—you, whose shape may be spanned by ten fingers. I hardly know you again."

We will relate hereafter the results of this discovery, which led to great and terrible events. At this moment, we will content ourselves with stating, what the reader has no doubt already guessed, that *Fleur-de-Marie* was the fruit of the secret marriage of Rodolph and Sarah, and that they both believed their daughter dead.

It has not been forgotten that Rodolph, after having visited the house in the Rue du Temple, had returned home, and intended, in the evening, to be present at a ball given by the —— ambassadress. It was to this fête that we shall follow his royal highness the reigning Grand Duke of Gerolstein, GUSTAVUS RODOLPH, travelling in France under the name of the *Count de Duren*.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BALL.

As the eleventh hour of the night sounded from the different clocks in Paris, the gates of an hôtel in the Rue Plumet were thrown open by a Swiss in rich livery, and forthwith issued a magnificent dark blue Berlin carriage, drawn by two superb long-tailed grey horses; on the seat, which was covered by a rich hammercloth, trimmed with a mossy silk fringe, sat a portly-looking coachman, whose head was ornamented by a three-cornered hat, while his rotund figure looked still more imposing in his dress livery-coat of blue cloth, trimmed up the seams with silver lace, and thickly braided with the same material: the whole finished by a splendid sable collar and cuffs. Behind the carriage stood a tall powdered lacquey, dressed in a livery of blue turned up with yellow and silver; and by his side was a chasseur, whose fierce-looking moustaches, gaily embroidered dress and hat, half concealed by a waving plume of blue and yellow feathers, completed a most imposing *coup-d'œil.*

The bright light of the lamps revealed the costly satin lining of the interior of the vehicle we are describing, in which were seated Rodolph, having on his right hand the Baron de Graün, and opposite to him the faithful Murphy.

Out of deference for the sovereign represented by the ambassador to whose ball he was then proceeding, Rodolph wore no other mark of distinction than the diamond order of * * * *

Round the neck of Sir Walter Murphy, and suspended by a broad orange riband, hung the enamelled cross of the grand commander of the Golden Eagle of Gerolstein; and a similar insignia decorated the Baron

de Graün, amidst an infinite number of the crosses and badges of honour belonging to all countries, depending by a gold chain placed in the two full button-holes of the diplomatist's coat.

"I am delighted," said Rodolph, "with the very favourable accounts I have received from Madame Georges respecting my poor little *protégée* at the farm of Bouqueval. David's care and attention have worked wonders. *Apropos* of La Goualeuse: what do you think, Sir Walter Murphy, any of your *Cité* acquaintances would say at seeing you so strangely *disguised*, as at present they would consider you, most valiant charcoal-man, to be? they would be somewhat astonished, I fancy."

"Much in the same degree as the surprise your royal highness would excite among your new acquaintances in the Rue du Temple, were you to proceed thither, as now attired, to pay a friendly visit to Madame Pipelet, and to inquire after the health of Cabrion's victim, the poor melancholy Alfred!"

"My lord has drawn so lively a sketch of Alfred, attired in his long-skirted green coat and bell-crowned hat," said the baron, "that I can well imagine him seated in magisterial dignity in his dark and smoky lodge. Let me hope that your royal highness's visit to the Rue du Temple has fully answered your expectations, and that you are in every way satisfied with the researches of my agent?"

"Perfectly so," answered Rodolph. "My success was even beyond my expectations."

Then, after a moment's painful silence, and to drive away the train of thought conjured up by the recollection of the probable guilt of Madame d'Harville, he resumed, in a tone more gay,—

"I am almost ashamed to own to so much childishness, but I confess myself amused with the contrast between my treating Madame Pipelet in the morning to a glass of cordial, and then proceeding in the evening to a grand fête, with all the pomp and *prestige* of one of those privileged beings who, by the grace of God, 'reign over this lower world.' Some men of small fortune would speak of my revenues as those of a *millionnaire*," added Rodolph, in a sort of parenthesis, alluding to the limited extent of his estates.

"And many *millionnaires*, my lord, might not have the rare, the admirable good sense, of the man of narrow means."

"Ah, my dear De Graün, you are really too good, much too good! you really overwhelm me," replied Rodolph, with an ironical smile, while the baron glanced at Murphy with the consciousness of a man who has just discovered he has been saying a foolish thing.

"Really, my dear De Graün," resumed Rodolph, "I know not how to acknowledge the weight of your compliment, or how to repay such delicate flattery in its own way."

"My lord, let me entreat of you not to take the trouble," exclaimed the baron, who had for the instant forgotten that Rodolph, who detested every species of flattery, always revenged himself by the most unsparing raillery on those who, directly or indirectly, addressed it to him.

"Nay, baron, I cannot allow myself to remain in your debt. You have praised my understanding—I will, in return, admire your countenance; for by my honour, as I sit beside you, you look like a

youth of twenty. Antinoüs himself could not boast of finer features, or a more captivating expression."

"My lord! my lord! I cry your mercy!"

"Behold him, Murphy, and say whether Apollo could display more graceful limbs, more light, and youthful proportions!"

"I beseech you, my lord, to pardon me, from the recollection of how long it is since I have permitted myself to utter the slightest compliment to your royal highness."

"Observe, Murphy, this band of gold which restrains, without concealing, the locks of rich black hair flowing over this graceful neck, and——"

"My lord! my lord! for pity's sake spare me! I repent, most sincerely, of my involuntary fault," said the unfortunate baron, with an expression of comic despair on his countenance truly ludicrous.

It must not be forgotten that the original of this glowing picture was at least fifty years of age; his hair grey, frizzled and powdered; a stiff, white cravat round his throat; a pale, withered countenance; and golden spectacles upon the horny bridge of his sharp, projecting nose.

"Pardon, my lord! pardon, for the baron," exclaimed the squire, laughing. "I beseech you not to overwhelm him beneath the weight of your mythological allusions. I will be answerable to your royal highness that my unlucky friend here will never again venture to utter a flattery, since so *truth* is translated in the new vocabulary of Gerolstein."

"What! old Murphy, too? Are you going to join in the rebellion against sincerity?"

"My lord, I am so sorry for the position of my unfortunate *vis-à-vis*, that——I beg I may divide his punishment with him."

"Charcoal-man in ordinary, your disinterested friendship does you honour. But seriously now, my dear De Graün, how have you forgotten that I only allow such fellows as D'Harneim and his train to flatter, for the simple reason that they know not how to speak the truth? That cuckoo-note of false praise belongs to birds of such feather as themselves,

and the species, they claim relationship with; but for a person of your mind and good taste to descend to its usage——oh, fie! baron, fie!"

"It is all very well, my lord," said the baron, sturdily; "but I must be allowed to say (with all due apology for my boldness), that there is no small portion of pride in your royal highness's aversion to receive even a just compliment."

"Well said, baron! Come, I like you better now you speak plain truths. But tell me how you prove your assertion?"

"Why, just so, my lord: because you repudiate it upon the same principle that might induce a beautiful woman, well aware of her charms, to say to one of her most enthusiastic admirers, 'I know perfectly well how handsome I am, and therefore your approval is perfectly uncalled for and unnecessary. What is the use of reiterating what every body knows? Is it usual to proclaim in the open streets that the sun shines, when all may see and feel certain of his mid-day brightness?'"

"Now, baron, you are shifting your ground, and becoming more dangerous as you become more adroit; and, by way of varying your punishment, I will only say that the infernal Polidori himself could not have more ingeniously disguised the poisonous draught of flattery, when seeking to persuade some poor victim to swallow it."

"My lord, I am now effectually silenced."

"Then," said Murphy (and this time with an air of real seriousness), "your royal highness has now no doubt as to its being really Polidori you encountered in the Rue du Temple?"

"I have ceased to have the least doubt on the subject, since I learned through you that he had been in Paris for some time past."

"I had forgotten, or, rather, purposely omitted to mention to your lordship," said Murphy in a sorrowing tone, "a name that never failed to awaken painful feelings; and knowing as I do how justly odious the remembrance of this man was to your royal highness, I studiously abstained from all reference to it."

The features of Rodolph were again overshadowed with gloom, and, plunged in a deep reverie, he continued to preserve unbroken the silence which prevailed until the carriage stopped in the court-yard of the embassy. The windows of the hôtel were blazing with a thousand lights, which shone brightly through the thick darkness of the night, while a crowd of lacqueys, in full-dress liveries, lined the entrance-hall, extending even to the saloons of reception, where the grooms of the chamber waited to announce the different arrivals.

M. le Comte * * * *, the ambasador, with his lady, had purposely remained in the first reception-room until the arrival of Rodolph, who now entered, followed by Murphy and M. de Graün.

Rodolph was then in his thirty-sixth year, in the very prime and perfection of manly health and strength. His regular and handsome features, with the air of dignity pervading his whole appearance, would have rendered him, under any circumstances, a strikingly attractive man; but, combined with the *éclat* of high birth and exalted rank, he was a person of first-rate importance in every circle in which he presented himself, and whose notice was assiduously sought for. Dressed with the utmost simplicity, Rodolph wore a white waistcoat and cravat; a blue coat, buttoned up closely, on the right breast of which sparkled a

diamond star, displayed to admiration the light yet perfect proportions of his graceful figure, while his well-fitting pantaloons, of black kerseymere, defined the finely formed leg and handsome foot in its embroidered stocking.

From the rareness of the Grand Duke's visits to the *haut monde*, his arrival produced a great sensation, and every eye was fixed upon him from the moment that, attended by Murphy and Baron de Graün, he entered the first *salon* at the embassy. An *attaché*, deputed to watch for his arrival, hastened immediately to apprise the ambassadress of the appearance of her illustrious guest. Her excellency instantly hurried, with her noble husband, to welcome their visitor, exclaiming,—

"Your royal highness is, indeed, kind, thus to honour our poor entertainment."

"Nay, madam," replied Rodolph, gracefully bowing on the hand extended to him, "your ladyship is well aware of the sincere pleasure it

affords to pay my compliments to yourself; and as for M. le Comte, he and I are two old friends, who are always delighted to meet. Are we not, my lord?"

"Your royal highness, in deigning to continue to me so flattering a place in your recollection, makes it still more impossible for me ever to forget your many acts of condescending kindness."

"I assure you, Monsieur le Comte, that in my memory the past never dies; or, at least, the pleasant part of it; for I make it a strict rule never to preserve any reminiscences of my friends but such as are agreeable and gratifying."

"Your royal highness has found the secret of being happy in your thoughts, and rendering others so at the same time," rejoined the ambassador, smiling with gratified pride and pleasure at a conference so cordially carried on before a gathering crowd of admiring auditors.

"Thus, then, madame," replied Rodolph, "will your flattering reception of to-night live long in my memory; and I shall promise myself the happiness of recalling this evening's fête, with its tasteful arrangements and crowd of attending beauties. Ah, Madame la Comtesse, who like you can effect such a union of taste and elegance as now sparkles around us?"

"Your royal hignness is too indulgent."

"But I have a very important question to ask you: Why is it that, lovely as are your fair guests, their charms are never seen to such perfection as when assembled beneath your hospitable roof?"

"Your royal highness is pleased to view our fair visitants through the same flattering medium with which you are graciously pleased to behold our poor endeavours for your and their amusement," answered the ambassador, with a deferential bow.

"Your pardon, count," replied Rodolph, "if I differ with you in opinion. According to my judgment, the cause proceeds wholly from our amiable hostess, Madame l'Ambassadrice."

"May I request of your royal highness to solve this enigma?" inquired the countess, smilingly.

"That is easily given, madame, and may be found in the perfect urbanity and exquisite grace with which you receive your lovely guests, and whisper to each a few charming and encouraging words, which, if the least bit exceeding strict truth," said Rodolph, smiling with good-tempered satire, "renders those who are even praised above their merits more radiant in beauty from your kind commendations, while those whose charms admit of no exaggeration are no less radiant with the happiness of finding themselves so justly appreciated by you: thus each countenance, thanks to the gentle arts you practise, is made to exhibit the most smiling delight, for perfect content will set off even homely features. And thus I account for why it is that woman, all lovely as she is, never looks so much so as when seen beneath your roof. Come, M. l'Ambassadeur, own that I have made out a good case, and that you entirely concur with me in opinion."

"Your royal highness has afforded me too many previous reasons to admire and adopt your opinions for me to hesitate in the present instance."

"And for me, my lord," said the countess, "at the risk of being

included among those fair ladies who get a *little* more praise or flattery (which was it your highness styled it?) than they deserve, I accept your very flattering explanation with as much qualified pleasure as if it were really founded on truth."

"In order more effectually to convince you, madame, that nothing is more correct than all I have asserted, let us make a few observations touching the fine effect of praise in animating and lighting up the countenance."

"Ah! my lord, you are laying a very mischievous snare for me," said the countess, smiling.

"Well, then, I will abandon that idea; but upon one condition, that you honour me by taking my arm. I have been told wonderful things of a 'Winter Garden'—a work from Fairyland. May I put up my humble petition to be allowed to see this new wonder of a 'hundred and one nights?'"

"Oh, my lord, with the utmost pleasure. But I see that your highness had received a most exaggerated account. Perhaps you will accompany me, and judge for yourself. Only in this instance I would fain hope that your habitual indulgence may induce you to feel as little disappointment as possible at finding how imperfectly the reality equals your expectations."

The ambassadress then took the offered arm of Rodolph, and proceeded

with him to the other *salons*, while the count remained conversing with the Baron de Graün and Murphy, whom he had been acquainted with for some time.

And a more beautiful scene of enchantment never charmed the eye than that presented by the aspect of the winter garden, to which Rodolph had conducted his noble hostess. Let the reader imagine an enclosure of about forty feet in length, and thirty in width (leading out of a long and splendid gallery), surmounted by a glazed and vaulted roof, the building being securely covered in for about fifty feet. Round the parallelogram it described, the walls were concealed by an infinite number of mirrors, over which was placed a small and delicate trellis of fine green

rushes, which, thanks to the strong light reflected on the highly polished glass, resembled an arbour, and were almost entirely hidden by a thick row of orange-trees, as large as those of the Tuileries, mixed with camelias of equal size; while the golden fruit and verdant foliage of the one contrasted beautifully with the rich clusters of waxen flowers, of all colours, with which the other was loaded. The remainder of the garden was thus devised.

Five or six enormous clumps of trees, and Indian or other tropical shrubs, planted in immense cases filled with peat earth, were surrounded by alleys paved with a mosaic shell-work, and sufficiently wide for two or three persons to walk abreast. It is impossible to describe the wondrous effect produced by this rich display of tropical vegetation in the midst of a European winter, and almost in the very centre of a ball-room. Here might be seen gigantic bananas stretching their tall arms to the glass roof which covered them, and blending the vivid green of their palms with the lanceolated leaves of the large magnolias some of which already displayed their matchless and odoriferous flowers with their bell-shaped calices, purple without and silvery white within, from which started forth the little gold-threaded stamens. At a little distance were grouped the palm and date-trees of the Levant; the red macaw, and fig-trees from India; all blooming in full health and vigour, and displaying their foliage in all its luxuriance, gave to the *tout ensemble* a mass of rich, brilliant tropical verdure, which, glittering among the thousand lights, sparkled with the colours of the emerald.

Along the trellising, between the orange-trees, and amid the clumps, were trained every variety of rare climbing plants: sometimes hanging their long wreaths of leaves and flowers in graceful festoons, then depending like blooming serpents from the tall boughs—now trailing at their roots—then ambitiously scaling the very walls, till they hung their united tresses round the transparent and vaulted roof—from which again they floated in mingled masses, waving in the pure light breeze loaded with so many odours. The winged pomegranate, the passion-flower, with its large purple flowers striated with azure, and crowned with its dark violet tuft, waved in long spiral wreaths over the heads of the admiring crowd, then, as though fatigued with the sport, threw their colossal garlands of delicate flowers across the hard prickly leaves of the gigantic aloes.

The bignonia of India, with its long cup-shaped flower of dark sulphur colour, and slight slender leaves, was placed beside the delicate flesh-coloured petals of the stephanotis, so justly appreciated for its exquisite perfume; the two stems mutually clinging to each other for support, and mingling their leaves and flowers in one confused mass, disposed them in elegant festoons of green fringe, spangled with gold and silver spots round the immense velvet foliage of the Indian fig. Further on, started forth, and then fell again in a sort of variegated and floral cascade, immense quantities of the stalks of the asclepias, whose leaves, large, umbellated, and in clusters of from fifteen to twenty star-shaped flowers, grew so thickly, so evenly, that they might have been mistaken for bouquets of pink enamel surrounded with leaves of fine green porcelain. The borders of the cases containing the oranges and camelias were filled with the choicest cape heaths, the tulips of Thol, the narcissus of Constan-

tinople, the hyacinths, irides, and cyclamina of Persia; forming a sort of natural carpet, presenting one harmonious blending of the loveliest tints.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk, some pale blue, others pink, partly concealed amid the foliage, threw a soft and gentle light over this enchanting scene; nor could a more ingenious idea have been resorted to than in the happy amalgamation of these two colours, by which a charming, and almost unearthly light was produced, combining the clear cœrulean blue of a summer's night with the rose-coloured coruscations emitted from sparkling rays of an aurora borealis.

The entrance to this immense hot-house was from a long gallery glittering with gold, with mirrors, crystal vases filled with the choicest perfumes, and brilliantly lighted, and also raised a few steps above the fairy palace we have been endeavouring to describe. The dazzling brightness of the approach served as a sort of penumbra, in which were indistinctly traced out the gigantic exotics discernible through a species of arch, partly concealed by two crimson velvet curtains looped back with golden cords so as to give a dim and misty view of the enchanted land that lay beyond. An imaginative mind might easily have persuaded himself he stood near a huge window opening on some beautiful Asiatic landscape during the tranquillity of a summer's twilight.

The sounds of the orchestra, weakened by distance, and broken by the joyous hum proceeding from the gallery, died languidly away among the motionless foliage of the huge trees. Insensibly each fresh visitant to this enchanting spot lowered his voice until his words fell in whispers; for the light genuine air, embalmed with a thousand rich odours, appeared to cast a sort of somnolency over the senses; every breath seemed to speak of the clustering plants whose balmy sweetness filled the atmosphere. Certainly two lovers, seated in some corner of this Eden, could conceive no greater happiness to be enjoyed on earth, than thus dreamily to rest beneath the trees and flowers of this terrestrial paradise.

At the end of this winter garden were placed immense divans beneath canopies of leaves and flowers; the subdued light of the hot-house forming a powerful contrast with the gallery, the distance seemed filled with a species of gold-coloured shining fog, in the midst of which glittered and flickered, like a living embroidery, the dazzling and varied robes of the ladies, combined with the prismatic scintillations of the congregated mass of diamonds and precious stones. Rodolph's first sensation upon arriving at this enchanting triumph of art over nature was that of most unfeigned surprise.

"This is, indeed, a wonderfully beautiful carrying out of a poetical idea," said he, almost involuntarily; then, turning to the ambassadress, he exclaimed, "Madame, till now, I had not deemed such wonders practicable. We have not in the scene before us a mere union of unbounded expense with the most exquisite taste, but you give us poetry in action. Instead of writing as a master poet, or painting as a first-rate artist, you create that which they would scarcely venture to dream of."

"Your royal highness is too indulgent."

"Nay, but candidly, all must agree that the mind which could so faithfully depict this ravishing scene, with its charm of colours and contrasts—beyond us, the loud notes of joy and mirthful revelry, here the soft silence and sweet gentle murmurs of distant voices, that lull the spirit into a fancied flight beyond this fitful existence,—surely, surely, without suspicion of flattery, it may be said of the planner and contriver of all this, such a one was born a poet and a painter combined."

"The praises of your royal highness are so much the more dangerous from the skill and cleverness with which they are uttered, and which makes us listen to them with delight, even in defiance of our sternest resolutions. But allow me to call your royal highness's attention to the very lovely person who is approaching us. I must have you admit that the Marquise d'Harville must shine pre-eminently beautiful *any* and *every* where. Is she not graceful? and does not the gentle elegance of her whole appearance acquire a fresh charm, from the contrast with the severe yet classic beauty by whom she is accompanied?"

The individuals thus alluded to were the Countess Sarah Macgregor and the Marquise d'Harville, who were at this moment descending the steps which led from the gallery to the winter garden. Neither was the panegyric bestowed by the ambassadress on Madame d'Harville at all exaggerated. No words can accurately describe the loveliness of her person, and the Marquise d'Harville was then in the first bloom of youthful charms; but her beauty, delicate and fragile as it was, appeared less to belong to the strict regularity of her features than to the irresistible expression of sweetness and universal kindness, which imparted a charm to her countenance impossible to resist, or to describe; and this peculiar charm served invariably to distinguish Madame d'Harville from all other fashionable beauties; for goodness of heart and kindliness of disposition are but rarely seen as the prevailing passions revealed in a face as fair, as young, high-born, and ardently worshipped by all, as was the Marquise d'Harville, who shone forth in all her lustre as the brightest star in the galaxy of fashion. Too wise, virtuous, and right-minded, to listen to the host of flatterers by whom she was surrounded, Madame d'Harville smiled as gratefully on all as though she could have given

them credit for speaking the truth, had not her own modest opinion of her just claims to such homage have forbidden her accepting of praise she never could have deserved. Wholly indifferent to flattery, yet sensibly alive to kindness, she perfectly distinguished between sympathy and insincerity. Her acute penetration, correct judgment, and lively wit, unmixed by the slightest ill-nature, made her wage an early, though good-tempered war, with those vain and egotistical beings who crowd and oppress society with the view of monopolising general attention, and, blinded by their own self-love, expect one universal deference and submission.

"Those kind of persons," said Madame d'Harville one day, laughingly, "appear to me as if their whole life were passed in dancing '*Le Cavalier Seul*' before an invisible mirror."

An unassuming and unpretending person, however reserved and, consequently unpopular, he might be with others, was sure to find a steady friend and partial observer in Madame d'Harville.

This trifling digression is absolutely essential to the right understanding of facts of which we shall speak hereafter.

The complexion of Madame d'Harville was of the purest white, tinged with the most delicate carnation; her long tresses of bright chestnut hair floated over her beautifully formed shoulders, white and polished as marble. It would be an impossible task to describe her large dark grey

Madame d'Harville.

eyes, fringed with their thick lashes, and beaming with angelic sweetness; her coral lips, with their gentle smile, gave to her eyes the indefinable charm that her affable and winning mode of expressing herself derived from their mild and angelic expression of approving goodness. We will not further delay the reader by describing the perfection of her figure, nor dwell upon the distinguished air which marked her whole appearance. She wore a white crape dress, trimmed with the natural flowers of the camelia, intermixed with its own rich green leaves. Here and there a diamond sparkled among the waxy petals, as if a dew-drop fresh from its native skies had fallen there. A garland of the same flowers, equally ornamented with precious stones, was placed with infinite grace upon her fair and open brow.

The peculiar style of the Countess Sarah Macgregor's beauty served to set off the fair feminine loveliness of her companion. Though turned thirty-five years of age, Sarah looked much younger. Nothing appears to preserve the body more effectually from all the attacks of sickness or decay than a cold-hearted, egotistical disregard of every one but ourselves; it encrusts the body with a cold icy covering, which alike resists the inroads of bodily or mental wear and tear. To this cause may be ascribed the wonderful preservation of Countess Sarah's appearance.

The lady whose name we last mentioned wore a dress of pale amber watered silk, beneath a crape tunic of the same colour. A simple wreath of the dark leaves of the *Pyrus Japonicus* encircled her head, and harmonised admirably with the bandeaux of raven hair it confined. This classically severe mode of head-dress gave to the profile of this imperious woman the character and resemblance of an antique statue. Many persons, mistaking their real cast of countenance, imagine some peculiar vocation delineated in their traits. Thus one man, who fancies he possesses a warlike air, assumes the warrior; another imagines

"His eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,"

marks him out as a poet; instantly he turns down his shirt-collar, adopts poetical language, and writes himself poet. So the self-imagined conspirator wastes days and hours in pondering over mighty deeds he feels called upon to do. The politician, upon the same terms, bores the world and his friends with his perpetual outpourings upon political economy; and the man whose saintly turn of countenance persuades its owner into the belief of a corresponding character within, forthwith abjures the pomps and vanities of the world, and aims at reforming his brethren by his pulpit eloquence. Now, ambition being Sarah's ruling passion, and her noble and aristocratical features well assisting the delusion, she smiled as the word "*diadem*" crossed her thoughts, and lent a willing ear to the predictions of her Highland nurse, and firmly believed herself predestined to a sovereign destiny. Spite of the trifling *embonpoint* that gave to her figure (which, though fatter than Madame d'Harville's, was not less slender and nymphlike) a voluptuous gracefulness, Sarah boasted of all the freshness of early youth, and few could long sustain the fire of her black and piercing eyes; her nose was aquiline; her finely formed mouth and rich ruby lips were expressive of the highest determination, haughtiness, and pride.

The marquise and Sarah had recognised Rodolph in the winter-garden at the moment they were descending into it from the gallery; but the prince feigned not to observe their presence.

"The prince is so entirely absorbed with the ambassadress," said Madame d'Harville to Sarah, "that he pays not the slightest attention to us."

"You are quite mistaken, my dear Clémence," rejoined the countess; "the prince saw us as quickly and as plainly as we saw him, but I frightened him away: you see he still bears malice with me."

"I am more than ever at a loss to understand the singular obstinacy with which he persists in shunning you—you, formerly an old friend. 'Countess Sarah and myself are sworn enemies,' replied he to me once in a joking manner; 'I have made a vow never to speak to her; and you may judge how sacred must be the vow that hinders me from conversing with so charming a lady.' And, strange and unaccountable as was this reply, I had no alternative but to submit to it."

"And yet I can assure you that the cause of this deadly feud, half in jest and half in earnest as it is, originates in the most simple circumstance. Were it not that a third party is implicated in it, I should have explained the whole to you long ago. But what is the matter, my dear child? You seem as though your thoughts were far from the present scene."

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you," replied the marquise, faintly; "but the gallery was so very hot, it gave me a violent headach. Let us sit down here for a minute or two. I hope and believe it will soon be better."

"You are right: see, here is a nice quiet corner, where you will be in perfect safety from the researches of those who are lamenting your absence," added Sarah, pronouncing the last words with marked emphasis.

The two ladies then seated themselves on a divan, almost concealed beneath the clustering shrubs and overhanging plants.

"I said *those*, who would be lamenting your absence, my dear Clémence—come, own that I deserve praise for so discreetly forming my speech."

The marquise blushed slightly, cast down her eyes, but spoke not.

"How unreasonable you are!" exclaimed Sarah, in a tone of friendly reproach. "Can you not trust me, my dear child?—yes, *child;* for am I not old enough to be your mother?"

"Not trust *you?*" uttered the marquise, sadly: "alas! have I not on the contrary confessed that to you which I should hardly have dared to own to myself?"

"Well, then, come, rouse yourself—now, let us have a little talk about HIM: and, so you have really sworn to drive him to despair?"

"For the love of Heaven," exclaimed Madame d'Harville, "think what you are saying!"

"I tell you I know him better than you do, my poor child: he is a man of cool and decided energy, who sets but little value on his life; he has had misfortunes enough to make him quite weary of it; and it really seems as if you daily found greater pleasure in tormenting him, and playing with his feelings."

"Is it possible you can really think so?"

"Indeed, in spite of myself, I cannot refrain from entertaining that

opinion. Oh, if you but knew how over-susceptible some minds are rendered by a continuance of sorrows and afflictions—just now I saw two large tears fall from his eyes, as he gazed on you."

"Are you quite sure of what you say?"

"Indeed I am quite certain; and that too in a ball-room, at the risk of becoming an object of general derision, if this uncontrollable misery were perceived! Ah! let me tell you, a person must truly love to bear all this, and even to be careless about concealing his sufferings from the world."

"For the love of Heaven, do not speak thus!" replied Madame d'Harville, in a voice trembling with emotion. "Alas! you have touched me nearly: I know too well what it is to struggle with a hidden grief, yet wear an outward expression of calmness and resignation. Alas! alas! 'tis the deep pity and commiseration I feel for him has been my ruin," added she, almost unconsciously.

"Nonsense! what an over-nice person you are, to talk of a little innocent flirtation being ruinous, and that too with a man so scrupulously guarded as to abstain from ever appearing in your husband's presence, for fear of compromising you. You must admit that M. Charles Robert is a man of surprising honour, delicacy, and real feeling. I feel the

more inclined to espouse his cause from the recollection that you have never met him elsewhere but at my house, and because I can answer for his principles, and that his devoted attachment to you can only be equalled by the deep respect he bears you."

"I have never doubted the many noble qualities you have so repeatedly assured me he possesses, but you know well that it is his long succession of bitter afflictions which have so warmly interested me in his favour."

"And well does he merit this interest, and most fully do his excellent

qualities absolve you of all blame in thus bestowing it. Surely so fine and noble a countenance bespeaks a mind equally superior to all mankind. How completely are you reminded, while gazing on his tall and finely proportioned figure, of the *preux chevaliers* of bygone days, '*sans peur et sans reproche.*' I once saw him dressed in his uniform as commandant of the national guard, and, handsome as he is, I really think he looked surpassingly well, and I could but say to myself, that, if nobility were the award of inward merit and external beauty, M. Charles Robert, instead of being so called, would take precedence of nearly all our dukes and peers. Would he not be a fitting representative of any of the most distinguished families in France?"

"You know, my dear countess, how very little importance I attach to mere birth, and you yourself have frequently reproached me with being strongly inclined to republicanism," said Madame d'Harville, gently smiling.

"For my own part, I always thought with you, that M. Charles Robert required not the aid of rank or titles to render him worthy of universal admiration. Then, what extreme talent he possesses! what a fine voice he has! and what delightful morning concerts we three have been able to achieve, owing to his all-powerful assistance! Ah, my dear Clémence, do you remember the first time you ever sung with him, what passionate expression did he not throw into the words of that beautiful duet, so descriptive of his love, and his fear of offending her who was the object of it, by revealing it?"

"Let me intreat of you," said Madame d'Harville, after a long silence, "to speak of something else; indeed I dare not listen further: what you but just now intimated of his depressed and unhappy appearance has caused me much pain."

"Nay, my dear friend, I meant not to grieve you, but merely to point out the probability that a man, rendered doubly sensitive by the succession of past misfortunes, might feel his courage insufficient to encounter the fresh trial of your rejection of his suit, and thus be induced to end his hopeless love and his life together."

"Oh, no more! no more!" almost shrieked Madame d'Harville, interrupting Sarah; "this fearful idea has glanced across my mind already." Then, after a second silence of some minutes, the marquise resumed, "Let us, as I said before, talk of somebody else—of your mortal enemy for instance," added she, with assumed gaiety of manner; "come, we will take the prince for a fresh theme of conversation: I had not seen him, previously to this evening, for a very long time. Do you know that I think he looks handsomer than ever? Though all but king, he has lost none of the winning sweetness and affability of his manner, and, spite of my republicanism, I must confess I have seldom, if ever, known so irresistible a person."

Sarah threw a side glance of deep and scrutinising hatred upon her unconscious rival, but, quickly recovering herself, she said, gaily,—

"Now, my dear Clémence, you must confess to being a most capricious little lady: you have regular alternating paroxysms of admiration and violent dislike for the prince; why, a few months ago, I mean about his first arrival here, you were so captivated by him, that, between

ourselves, I was half afraid you had lost your heart past all hope of recall."

"Thanks to you," replied Madame d'Harville, smiling, "my admiration was very short-lived; for so well did you act up to your character of the prince's sworn foe, and such fearful tales did you tell me of his profligacy and misconduct, that you succeeded in inspiring me with an aversion as powerful as had been the *infatuation* which led you to fear for the safety of my heart; which, by the way, I cannot think would ever have been placed in any danger from the attempts of your enemy to disturb its repose, since, shortly before you gave me those frightful particulars of the prince's character, he had quite ceased to honour me with his visits, although on the most intimate and friendly terms with my husband."

"Talking of your husband, pray is he here to-night?" inquired Sarah.

"No," replied Madame d'Harville, in a tone of embarrassment; "he preferred remaining at home.

"He seems to me to mix less and less in the world."

"He never liked what is called fashionable gaiety."

The marquise's agitation visibly increased; and Sarah, whose quick eye easily perceived it, continued,—

"The last time I saw him he looked even paler than usual."

"He has been very much out of health lately."

"My dearest Clémence, will you permit me to speak to you without reserve?"

"Oh, yes! pray do!"

"How comes it that the least allusion to your husband always throws you into such a state of extraordinary alarm and uneasiness?"

"What an idea! is it possible you can mean it seriously?" asked poor Madame d'Harville, trying to smile.

"Indeed I am quite in earnest," rejoined her companion; "whenever you are speaking of him, your countenance assumes, even in spite of yourself——but how shall I make myself understood?" and Sarah, with the tone and fixed gaze of one who wished to read the most secret thoughts of the person she addressed, slowly and emphatically added—"A look of mingled aversion and fear!"

The fixed pallid features of Madame d'Harville at first defied even Sarah's practised eye, but her keen gaze soon detected a slight convulsive working of the mouth, with a tremulous movement of the under-lip of her victim, but feeling it unsafe to pursue the subject further at this moment so as to awaken the marquise's mistrust of her friendly intentions, by way, therefore, of concealing her real suspicions, she continued,—

"Yes, just that sort of dislike any woman would entertain for a peevish, jealous, ill-tempered——"

At this explanation of the countess's meaning, as regarded Madame d'Harville's imagined dislike to her husband, a heavy load seemed taken from her; the working of her lip ceased, and she replied,—

"Let me assure you M. d'Harville is neither peevish nor jealous." Then, as if searching for some means of breaking a conversation so painful to her feelings, she suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! here comes that tiresome friend of my husband's, the Duke de Lucenay—I hope he has

not seen us—where can he have sprung from? I thought he was a thousand miles off!"

Duke de Lucenay.

"It was reported that he had gone somewhere in the East for a year or two, and behold, at the end of five months, here he is back again! His unexpected arrival must have sadly annoyed the Duchess de Lucenay, though poor De Lucenay is a very inoffensive creature," said Sarah, with an ill-natured smile. "Nor will Madame de Lucenay be the only one to feel vexation at his thus changing his mind; her friend, M. de St. Remy, will duly and affectionately sympathise in all her regrets on the subject."

"Come, come! my dear Sarah, I cannot allow you to scandalise; say that this return of M. de Lucenay is a nuisance to everybody; the duke is sufficiently disagreeable for you to generalise the regret his unexpected presence occasions."

"I do not slander, I merely repeat. It is also said that M. de St. Remy, the model of our young *élégantes*, whose splendid doings have filled all Paris, is all but ruined! 'Tis true, he has by no means reduced

either his establishment or his expenditure: however, there are several ways of accounting for that; in the first place, Madame de Lucenay is immensely rich."

"What a horrible idea!"

"Still I only repeat what others say. There, the duke sees us: he is coming towards us; we must resign ourselves to our fate—miserable—is it not? I know nothing so hard to bear as that man's company; he makes himself so very disagreeable, and then laughs so disgustingly loud at the silly things he says. Indeed, he is so boisterous that the bare idea of him makes one think of pretending to faint, or any other pretext, to avoid him. Talking of fainting, pray let me beg of you, if you have the least regard for your fan or essence-bottle, to beware how you allow him to handle either, for he has the unfortunate habit of breaking whatever he touches, and all with the most facetious self-satisfied air imaginable."

Belonging to one of the first families in France, still young, and with a face that would have been agreeable had it not been for the almost ridiculous and disproportionate length of his nose, M. de Lucenay joined to a restless love of constant motion the habit of talking and laughing fearfully loud upon subjects quite at variance with good taste or polished manners, and throwing himself into attitudes so abrupt and awkward, that it was only by recalling who he was, that his being found in the midst of the most distinguished societies in Paris could be accounted for, or a reason assigned for tolerating his gestures and language; for both of which he had now, by dint of long practice and adherence, acquired a sort of free license or impunity. He was shunned like the plague, although not deficient in a certain description of wit, which told here and there amid the indescribable confusion of remarkable phraseology which he allowed himself the use of; in fact he was one of those unintentional instruments of vengeance one would always like to employ in the wholesale chastisement of persons who have rendered themselves either ridiculous or abhorrent.

The Duchess de Lucenay, one of the most agreeable, and, at the same time, most fashionable women in Paris (spite of her having numbered thirty summers), had more than once furnished matter of conversation among the scandal-dealers of Paris; but her errors, whatever they were supposed to be, were pardoned, in consideration of the heavy drawback of such a partner as M. de Lucenay.

Another feature in the character of this latter-named individual was a singular affectation of the most absurd and unknown expressions, relative to imaginary complaints and ridiculous infirmities he amused himself in supposing you suffered from, and concerning which he would make earnest inquiries, in a loud voice, and in the immediate presence of a hundred persons. But possessed of first-rate courage, and always ready to take the consequences of his disagreeable jokes, M. de Lucenay had been concerned in various affairs of honour arising out of them, with varied success; coming off sometimes victor, sometimes vanquished, without being in any way cured of his unpleasant and annoying tricks.

All this premised, we will ask the reader to imagine the loud, harsh voice of the personage we have been describing, shouting from the distance at which he first recognised Madame d'Harville and Sarah,—

"Holla! holla! who is that out there? Come, who is it? let's see. What! the prettiest woman at the ball sitting out here, away from every body! I can't have this; it was high time I returned from the other end of the world to put a stop to such doings as this. I tell you what, marquise, if you persist in thus concealing yourself from general view, and cheating people from looking at you, I will set up a cry of fire! fire! that shall bring every one out of the ball-room, around you."

And then, by way of terminating his discourse, M. de Lucenay threw himself almost on his back beside the two ladies, crossed his left leg over his right thigh, and held his foot in his hand.

"You have soon returned from Constantinople, my lord," observed Madame d'Harville, fancying it was necessary to say something, and, at the same time, drawing away from her unpleasant neighbour with ill-concealed impatience.

"Ah, that is just what my wife said! '*Already* back, my lord?' exclaimed she, when she saw me alight from my travelling-carriage; 'why, bless me, I did not expect you so SOON!' And, do you know, instead of flying to my arms, as if the surprise had delighted her, she turned quite sulky, and refused to appear with me at this, my first ball since my return! And, upon my soul, I declare her staying away has caused a far greater sensation than my presence—droll, is'nt it? 'pon my life I declare I can't make it out. When she is with me, nobody pays the least attention to me; but when I entered the room alone to-night such a crowd came humming and buzzing round me, all calling out at once—'Where is Madame de Lucenay? is not she coming this evening? oh, dear, what a disappointment! how vexatious! how disagreeable!' &c. &c. And then, marquise, when I come where you are, and expect, after returning all the way from Constantinople, you will be overjoyed to see me—you look upon me as if I were a dog running amidst an interesting game of nine-pins; and yet, for all I see, I am just as agreeable as other people."

"And it would have been so easy for you to have continued agreeable—in the East," added Madame d'Harville, slightly smiling.

"Stop abroad, you mean, I suppose; yes, I dare say. I tell you I could not, and I would not; and it is not quite what I like, to hear you say so!" exclaimed M. de Lucenay, uncrossing his legs, and beating the crown of his hat after the fashion of a tambourine.

"Well, for Heaven's sake, my lord, be still, and do not call out so very loudly," said Madame d'Harville, angrily, "or really you will compel me to change my place."

"Change your place! Ah, to be sure! you want to take my arm, and walk about the gallery a little; come along then, I'm ready."

"Walk with you! certainly not! And pray let me beg of you not to meddle with that bouquet—and have the goodness not to touch the fan either, you will only break it, as you always do."

"Oh, bless you! talking of breaking fans, I am unlucky. Did my wife ever shew you a magnificent Chinese fan, given to her by Madame de Vaudémont? Well, I broke that!" And, having delivered himself of these comforting words, M. de Lucenay again threw himself back on the divan he had been lounging on, but, with his accustomed *gaucherie*,

contrived to pitch himself over the back of it, on to the ground, grasping in his hand a quantity of the floating wreaths of climbing plants which depended from the boughs of the trees under which the party was sitting, and which he had been, for some time, amusing himself with essaying to catch, as, moved by the light breeze admitted into the place, they undulated gracefully over his head. The suddenness of his fall brought down, not only those he held, but the parent stems belonging to them; and poor De Lucenay was so covered by the mass of foliage thus unexpectedly obtained, that, ere he could thoroughly disengage himself from their circling tendrils, he presented the appearance of some monarch of May-day crowned with his leafy diadem. So whimsical an appearance

as he presented drew down roars of deafening, stunning laughter; much to the annoyance of Madame d'Harville, who would quickly have got out of the vicinity of so awkward and unpleasant a person had she not perceived

M. Charles Robert (le commandant of Madame Pipelet's accounts) advancing from the other end of the gallery; and, unwilling to appear as though going to meet him, she once more resumed her seat beside M. de Lucenay.

"I say, Lady Macgregor," vociferated the incorrigible De Lucenay, "did'nt I look preciously like a wild man of the woods, or the god Pan, or a sylvan, or a naiade, or some of those savage creatures, with that green wreath round my head? Oh, but talking of savages," added he, abruptly approaching Sarah, "Lady Macgregor, I must tell you a most outrageously indecent story. Just imagine that at Otaheite ——"

"My lord duke——" interrupted Sarah, in a tone of freezing rebuke.

"Just as you like—you are not obliged to hear my story if you don't like it; you are the loser, that's all. Ah! I see Madame de Fonbonne out there, I shall keep it for her: she is a dear, kind creature, and will be delighted to hear it; so I'll save it for her."

Madame de Fonbonne was a fat little woman, of about fifty years of age, very pretending, and very ridiculous. Her fat double chin rested on her equally fat throat; and she was continually talking, with upturned eyes, of her tender, her sensitive soul; the languor of her soul; the craving of her soul; the aspirations of her soul. To these disadvantages, she added the additional one of being particularly ill-dressed, upon the present occasion, in a horrible-looking copper-coloured turban, with a sprinkling of green flowers over it.

"Yes," again asserted De Lucenay, in his loudest voice, "that charming anecdote shall be told to Madame de Fonbonne."

"May I be permitted, my lord duke, to inquire the subject of your conversation?" said the lady thus apostrophised, who, hearing her name mentioned, immediately commenced her usual mincing, bridling attempts to draw up her little chubby self, but, failing in the effort, fell back upon the easier manœuvre of "rolling up the whites of her eyes," as it is commonly called.

"It refers, madam, to a most horribly indecent, revolting, and strange story."

"Heaven bless me! and who dares?——oh, dear me! who would venture ——"

"I would, madam. I can answer for the truth of the anecdote, and that it would make a stick or a stone blush to hear it; but, as I am aware how dearly you love such stories, I will relate it to you. You must know, then, that in Otaheite ——"

"My lord," exclaimed the indignant lady, turning up her eyes with indignant horror, "it really is surprising you can allow yourself to——!"

"Now for those unkind looks you shall not hear my pretty story either, though I had been reserving it for you. And, now I look at you, I can but wonder that you, so celebrated for the taste and good style of your dress, should have put that wretched thing on your head for a turban, but which looks more like an old copper baking-dish spotted all over with verdigris." So saying, the duke, as if charmed with his own wit, burst into a loud and long peal of laughter.

"If, my lord," exclaimed the enraged lady, "you merely returned from the East to resume your offensive jokes, which are tolerated because

you are supposed to be only half in your senses, all who know you are bound to hope you intend to return as quickly as you came;" saying which she arose, and majestically waddled away.

Madame de Fonbonne.

"I tell you what, Lady Macgregor, if I don't take devilish good care, I shall let fly at that stupid old prude and pull her old stew-pan off her head," said M. de Lucenay, thrusting his hands deep down into his pockets as if to prevent their committing the retaliating mischief he contemplated. "But no," said he, after a pause, "I wont hurt the 'sensitive soul,' poor innocent thing! ha! ha! ha! Besides, think of her being an orphan at her tender age!" And renewed peals of laughter announced that the imagination of the duke had again found a fresh fund of amusement in some reminiscence of Madame de Fonbonne; which, however, soon gave place to an expression of surprise, as the figure of the commandant, sauntering towards them, caught his eye.

"Holla!" cried he, "there's M. Charles Robert. I met him last summer at the German baths: he is a deuced fine fellow—sings like a swan. Now, marquise, I'll shew you some fun—just see how I'll bother him. Would you like me to introduce him to you?"

"Be quiet, if you can," said Sarah, turning her back, most unceremoniously, upon M. de Lucenay, "and let us alone, I beg."

As M. Charles Robert, while affecting to be solely occupied in admiring the rare plants on either side of him, continued to advance, M. de Lucenay had cleverly contrived to get possession of Sarah's *flacon d'esprit*, and was deeply and silently engaged in the interesting employment of demolishing the stopper of the trinket.

Still M. Charles Robert kept on his gradual approach to the party he was, in reality, making the object of his visit. His figure was tall and finely proportioned; his features boasted the most faultless regularity; his dress was in the first style of modern elegance; yet his countenance,

his whole person, were destitute of grace, or that *distingué* air which is more to be coveted than mere beauty, whether of face or figure; his movements were stiff and constrained, and his hands and feet large and coarse. As he approached Madame d'Harville his insipid and insignificant countenance assumed, all at once, an expression of the deepest melancholy, too sudden to be genuine; nevertheless he acted the part as closely to nature as might be. M. Robert had the air of a man so thoroughly wretched, so oppressed by a multitude of sorrows, that as he came up to Madame d'Harville she could not help recalling to mind the fearful mention made by Sarah touching the violence to which grief such as his might drive him.

"How are you? how are you, my dear sir?" exclaimed the Duke de Lucenay, interrupting the further approach of the commandant. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you since we met at the spas of —— But what the devil ails you—are you ill?"

Hereupon M. Charles Robert assumed a languid and sentimental air, and, casting a melancholy look towards Madame d'Harville, replied, in a tone of deep depression,—

"Indeed, my lord, I am very far from being well."

"God bless me! why, what is the matter with you? Ah! I suppose that confounded plaguy cough still sticks to you," said M. de Lucenay, with an appearance of the most serious interest in the inquiry.

At this ridiculous question, M. Charles Robert stood for a moment as

though struck dumb with astonishment, but, quickly recovering himself, said, while his face crimsoned, and his voice trembled with rage, in a short, firm voice, to M. de Lucenay,—

"Since you express so much uneasiness respecting my health, my lord, I trust you will not fail calling to-morrow to know how I am."

"Upon my life and soul, my dear sir, I —— but most certainly I will *send*," said the duke, with a haughty bow to M. Charles Robert, who, coolly returning it, walked away.

"The best of the joke is," said M. de Lucenay, throwing himself again by the side of Sarah, "that our tall friend there had no more of a spitting complaint than the great Turk himself—unless, indeed, I stumbled upon the truth without knowing it. Well, he might have that complaint for any thing I know or care. What do you think, Lady Macgregor—did that great tall fellow look, to you, as though he were suffering from *la pituite?*"*

Sarah's only reply was an indignant rising from her seat, and hasty removal from the vicinage of the annoying Duke de Lucenay.

All this had passed with the rapidity of thought. Sarah had experienced considerable difficulty in restraining her inclination to indulge in a hearty fit of laughter at the absurd question put by the Duke de Lucenay to the commandant; but Madame d'Harville had painfully sympathised with the feelings of a man so ridiculously interrogated in the presence of the woman he loved. Then, horror-struck as the probable consequences of the duke's jest rose to her mind, led away by her dread of the duel which might arise out of it, and still further instigated by a feeling of deep pity for one who seemed to her misled imagination as marked out for every venomed shaft of envy, malice, and revenge, Clémence rose abruptly from her seat, took the arm of Sarah, overtook M. Charles Robert, who was boiling over with rage, and whispered to him, as she passed,—

"TO-MORROW, AT ONE O'CLOCK, I WILL BE THERE."

Then, regaining the gallery with the countess, she immediately quitted the ball.

Rodolph, in appearing at this fête, besides fulfilling a duty imposed on him by his exalted rank and place in society, was further influenced by the earnest desire to ascertain how far his suspicions, as regarded Madame d'Harville, were well founded, and if she were, indeed, the heroine of Madame Pipelet's account. After quitting the winter-garden with the Countess de * * * * he had, in vain, traversed the various salons in the hopes of meeting Madame d'Harville alone. He was returning to the hot-house when, being momentarily delayed at the top of the stairs, he was witness to the rapid scene between Madame d'Harville and M. Charles Robert after the joke played off by the Duke de Lucenay. The significant glances exchanged between Clémence and the commandant struck Rodolph powerfully, and impressed him with the firm conviction that this tall and prepossessing individual was the mysterious lodger of the Rue du Temple. Wishing for still further confirmation of the idea, he returned to the gallery. A waltz was about to commence, and in the course of a few minutes he saw M. Charles Robert standing in the door

* A sort of viscous, phlegmy complaint.

way, evidently revelling in the satisfaction of his own ideas; enjoying, in the first place, the recollection of his own retort to M. de Lucenay (for M. Charles Robert, spite of his egregious folly and vanity, was by no means destitute of bravery), and, secondly, revelling in the triumph of thus obtaining a voluntary assignation with Madame d'Harville for the morrow; and something assured him that this time she would be punctual. Rodolph sought for Murphy.

"Do you see that fair young man," said he, "standing in the midst of that group out there?"

"You mean the tall individual who seems so much amused with his own thoughts, do you not?—yes, yes, I see him."

"Endeavour to get sufficiently near to him to be enabled to whisper, so that he alone can catch the words, while you carefully avoid allowing him to see the person who utters them, this sentence,—'YOU ARE LATE, MY ANGEL!'"

The squire gazed at Rodolph with a perplexed air.

"My lord, do you seriously wish me to do this?"

"Seriously, my dear Murphy, I do; and should he hastily turn round when you have spoken, assume that incomparable air of perfect nonchalance for which you are so justly celebrated, so as to prevent his being able to fix upon you as the person who has spoken."

"Depend upon my perfect obedience, my lord, although I am far from having the slightest idea of your intention in assigning to me such a task."

Before the conclusion of the waltz, the worthy Murphy had contrived to place himself immediately behind M. Charles Robert, while Rodolph,

posted in a situation most advantageous for watching the effect of this experiment, carefully observed Murphy's movements. In a minute, M. Charles Robert turned suddenly round, as though struck with astonishment and wonder. The immovable squire stirred not a feature; and certainly Murphy's tall, portly figure, bald head, and grave, composed

countenance, appeared the least likely of any in the room to be those of a man taking part in such a trick; and, indeed, it was evident, from the continued gaze of the commandant in every other part of the space they stood in, that M. Charles Robert was far from suspecting his respectable, middle-aged neighbour of giving utterance to a phrase so disagreeably recalling the *quid pro quo* of which Madame Pipelet had been alike the cause and the heroine. The waltz concluded, Murphy rejoined Rodolph.

"Well, my lord," said he, "that smart young gentleman jumped as though he had trodden on a hornet's nest: the words I uttered appeared to have the effect of magic on him."

"They were so far magical, my dear Murphy, as they assisted me to discover a circumstance I was most anxious to find out."

Conviction thus painfully obtained, Rodolph could only deplore the dangerous position in which Madame d'Harville had placed herself, and which seemed to him fraught with fresh evils, from a vague presentiment of Sarah's being either a sharer or a confidant in the transaction, and with this discovery came the fresh pain of believing that he had now found out the source of M. d'Harville's secret sorrow; the man he so highly esteemed, and for whom he felt a brother's regard, was pining in silence over the misconduct of a wife he so tenderly loved, yet who, spite of her many charming qualities, could sacrifice her own and husband's happiness for the sake of an object so every way unworthy. Master of so important a secret, yet incapable of betraying it, unable to devise any plan to open the eyes of Madame d'Harville, who seemed rather to yield to than resist her unlicensed passion for her lover, Rodolph found himself obliged to remain a passive witness to the utter ruin of a woman he had so passionately adored with as much silence as devotion; nay, whom, spite of his best efforts, he still loved. He was roused from these reflections by M. de Graün.

"If your royal highness," said the baron, bowing, "will deign to grant me a brief interview in one of the lower rooms, which is now quite devoid of company, I shall have the honour to lay before you the particulars you desired me to collect."

Rodolph signed to M. de Graün to conduct him to the place named, when the baron proceeded with his recital, as follows:—

"The only duchess to whose name the initials 'N.' and 'L.' can possibly belong is Madame de Lucenay, whose maiden name was Normant. Her grace is not here this evening: I have just seen M. de Lucenay, her husband, who, it seems, left Paris about five months ago, with the expressed intention of travelling in the East during the next year or two, but has unexpectedly returned within the last day or two."

It may be recollected that, during Rodolph's visit to the Rue du Temple, he picked up, on the landing-place adjoining the door of the charlatan dentist's apartments, a cambric handkerchief, richly embroidered and trimmed with costly lace, and bearing in the corner a ducal coronet with the initials "N. L." It will also be borne in mind that this elegant indication of high rank was wetted with the bitter tears of its noble owner. In pursuance of his instructions, but in total ignorance of the circumstances suggesting them, M. de Graün had inquired the name of every duchess then in Paris, and gleaned the information now repeated to Rodolph, and which the latter perfectly comprehended. He had no

reason for interesting himself in the fate of Madame de Lucenay; but he could not reflect without a shudder, that if it were really she who visited the pretended doctor (but who, he felt assured, was no other than the infamous Polidori), this wretch having possessed himself of her real name and address through the agency of Tortillard, might make a fearful use of a secret which placed the duchess so completely in his power.

"Chance is a strange thing, my lord, is it not?" resumed M. de Graün.

"It is; but how does it apply to the present case?"

"Why, at the very instant that M. de Grangeneuve was giving me these facts concerning M. and Madame de Lucenay, and was adding, rather ill-naturedly, that the unlooked-for return of the duke must have proved particularly disagreeable, not only to the duchess but to the Viscount de Saint-Remy, one of the most elegant and fashionable young men in Paris, his excellency the ambassador came up and inquired whether your royal highness would permit him to present the viscount to you, as having just been appointed on the legation to Gerolstein, he would be happy to avail himself of the present opportunity of paying his court to your highness."

An expression of impatience escaped Rodolph, who exclaimed,—

"Nothing could have been less agreeable to me. However, it is impossible to refuse. Let the count know, therefore, that I am ready to receive M. de Saint-Remy."

Rodolph knew too well how to support his princely dignity, to allow his feelings to interfere with the courtesy and affability required on the present occasion; added to which, the world gave M. de Saint-Remy as a favoured lover to the Duchess de Lucenay, and this circumstance greatly excited the curiosity of Rodolph.

The Viscount de Saint-Remy, conducted by the Count de * * *, now approached. He was an exceedingly handsome young man, of about twenty-five years of age, tall and slender, with the most *distingué* air and prepossessing physiognomy; his olive complexion had that rich soft glow of amber cast over its transparent surface, so remarkable in the paintings of Murillo; his glossy black hair, parted over his left temple, was worn smooth over his forehead, and fell in light and easy curls down the sides of his face, almost concealing the pale, well-shaped ear. The deep, dark eyelash contrasted well with the clear eye it shaded, the crystal of which was tinged with that pale blue cast which bestows so much and such charming expression to the Indian eye. By a singular caprice of Nature, the thick silky moustache which graced his lip was the only ornament of a similar description visible on his countenance, the chin and cheeks being smooth as those of a young maiden. Perhaps it might be vanity which dictated the narrow black satin cravat, placed so low as to reveal the perfect contour of a throat which, for whiteness and symmetrical roundness, might have furnished a model for the artist's studio. The long ends of his cravat were confined by a single pearl, inestimable for its size, the beauty of its shape, and the splendour of its colour—so vivid, that an opal could scarcely have rivalled its continued prismatic changes. The perfect taste and exquisite style of M. de Saint-Remy harmonised well with the magnificent simplicity of this jewel.

Once seen, the face and figure of M. de Saint-Remy was never forgotten, so entirely did it differ from the usual style of *élégants*. He spared

no expense in procuring the most faultless turn-out, and his carriages and horses were every where cited as models of taste and correct judgment.

M. de St-Remy.

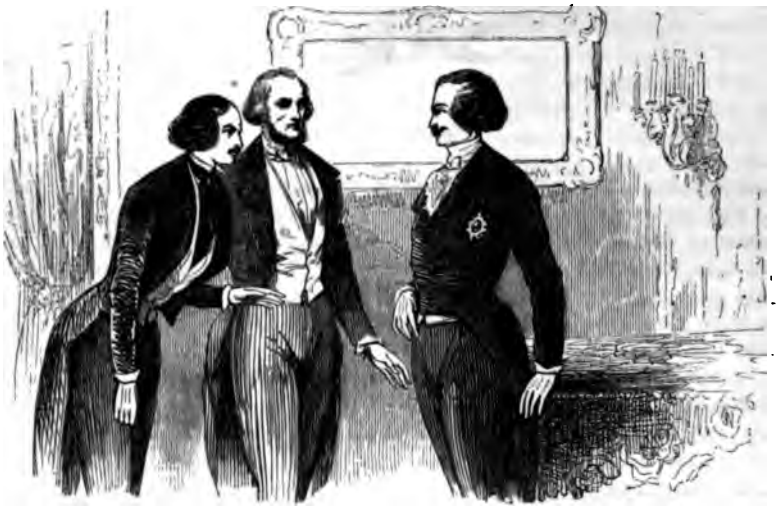
He played high, but skilfully; while the annual amount of his betting-book was never less than from two to three thousand louis. The costly elegance of his mansion, in the Rue de Chaillot, was every where spoken of and admired. There he gave the most exquisite dinner-parties. The highest play followed, and the hospitable host would lose large and heavy sums with the most perfect indifference, though it was known that his fortune had been dissipated long ago. All the viscount's property had been derived from his mother; while his father lived in utter seclusion in the wilds of Anjou, upon an income of the most slender description.

By way of accounting for the unbounded expenditure of M. de Saint-Remy, many among the envious or ill-natured referred, as Sarah had done, to the large fortune of the Duchess de Lucenay; but they forgot that, setting aside the infamy of the idea, M. de Lucenay would naturally

direct the disposal of his wife's property, and that M. de Saint-Remy's annual expenses were at least two hundred thousand francs. Suspicions were entertained of his being deeply indebted to imprudent money-lenders; for Saint-Remy had no further inheritance to look forward to. Others, again, spoke of his great successes on the turf, and hinted, in an undertone, dark stories of training-grounds, and jockeys bribed by him to make the horses against which he had betted largely lose; but by far the greater number of the crowd by which Saint-Remy was surrounded were content to eat his dinners, and occasionally to win his rouleaux, without troubling themselves with conjectures as to how the one was provided, and where the other came from.

By birth and education, he was fully entitled to the rank he occupied in the fashionable world; he was lively, witty, brave, a most amusing companion, obliging and complaisant to the wishes of others; he gave first-rate bachelor dinners, and afterwards took every bet that was offered him. What more was required to secure his popularity? He was an universal favourite with the fair sex, and could boast the most unvaried success in all his love affairs; he was young, handsome, gallant, and unsparingly munificent upon all occasions where opportunities occurred of marking his devotion towards the high-bred females with whom he associated in the *grande monde;* in a word, thanks to the general infatuation he excited, the air of mystery thrown over the source of the Pactolus from which he derived his golden supplies rather embellished him with a certain mysterious charm, which seemed but to add to his attractions. Sometimes it would be said, with a careless smile, "What a fellow that Saint-Remy is! he must have discovered the philosopher's stone to be able to go the pace he does." And when it was known that he had caused himself to be attached to the legation of France to the court of Gerolstein, there were not wanting voices to assert that it was a "devilish" good way of making an "*honourable retreat.*" Such was M. de Saint-Remy.

"Allow me," said the Count de * * *, presenting M. de Saint-Remy,



" to introduce to your royal highness the Viscount de Saint-Remy, attached to the embassy of Gerolstein."

The viscount bowed profoundly, saying,—

" May I trust your royal highness will deign to pardon my impatience in requesting the honour of this introduction during the present evening. I am, perhaps, unduly hasty in my wishes to secure a gratification I have so long aspired to."

" It will give me much pleasure, my lord, to welcome you to Gerolstein. Do you propose going thither immediately?"

" Your royal highness being in Paris diminishes very materially my desire to do so."

" I fear the peaceful contrast of our German courts will scarcely assort with a life of Parisian fashion, such as you have always been accustomed to."

" Permit me to assure your royal highness that the gracious kindness you have now shewn me, and which it shall be my study to merit a continuance of in Gerolstein, would of itself far outweigh any attractions Paris may have had for me."

" It will not be my fault, my lord, should you see cause to alter your sentiments when at Gerolstein."

A slight inclination of Rodolph's head announced that the presentation was concluded, upon which the viscount bowed and retired. The prince, a practised physiognomist, was subject to involuntary likes and dislikes upon the first interview with an individual, and these impulses were in his case almost invariably borne out by after-circumstances. His first sensation after the exchange of the very few words we have related between himself and Saint-Remy was an unaccountable feeling of repugnance and aversion for the gay and fascinating young man: to his eye, the handsome features wore a sinister look, and danger seemed to lurk even in his honeyed words and smooth polished manner.

We shall hereafter meet M. de Saint-Remy under circumstances differing widely and fearfully from the splendour of the position he occupied at his first interview with Rodolph. It will then be seen how far these presentiments were ill or well founded.

The presentation over, Rodolph, in deep meditation upon the singular rencontres effected by the hand of chance, bent his steps towards the winter-garden. It was now the hour of supper, and the rooms were nearly deserted. The most retired spot in the hot-house was at the end of a clump of trees placed against the corner of a wall, and an enormous banana, covered with climbing plants, effectually concealed a small side door, masked by the trellis, and conducting to the banquetting-hall by a long corridor. This door, which was scarcely a yard distant from the tree above mentioned, had been left temporarily ajar. Sheltered by this verdant screen, Rodolph seated himself, and was soon lost in a profound reverie, when the sound of a well-known voice, pronouncing his name, made Rodolph start. It was Sarah, who, seated with her brother Tom on the other side of the clump of trees which effectually hid Rodolph from their view, was conversing with him in the English language. The prince listened attentively, and the following dialogue ensued:—

" The marquise has just gone to shew herself for a few minutes at Baron de Nerval's ball," said Sarah; " she has luckily quitted this place

without once having an opportunity of exchanging a word with Rodolph, who has been looking every where for her. I still dread the influence he possesses over her, even unknown to herself,—an influence it has cost me so much labour and difficulty to combat, and partly to destroy. However, to-morrow will rid me of any further fears of a rival who, if not effectually destroyed, might so powerfully derange and overthrow my plans. Listen to me, brother, for it is of serious matters I would speak to you. To-morrow witnesses the eternal ruin of my hated rival."

"You are mistaken, Sarah," answered Tom's well-remembered voice; "Rodolph never loved the marquise: of that I am certain; your jealous fears mislead you."

"It is time," returned Sarah, "that I enlightened you on this subject. Many things occurred during your last journey, and as it is necessary to take decisive steps even earlier than I had expected—nay, this very night—so soon as we quit this place, it becomes indispensably necessary we should take serious counsel together. Happily we are now quite alone, for the gay butterflies of the night have found fresh attraction round the supper-tables. Now, then, brother, give your close and undivided attention to what I am about to say."

"Proceed, I am all impatience."

"Well, before Clémence d'Harville met Rodolph, I feel assured the passion of love was wholly unknown to her, for what reason I have never been able to discover. She entertains the most invincible repugnance and aversion towards her husband, who perfectly adores her. There is some deep mystery in this part of the business I have never succeeded in fathoming. A thousand new and delightful emotions sprung up in the breast of Clémence after she became acquainted with Rodolph; but I stifled her growing love by the most frightful disclosures, or rather ingeniously invented calumnies, concerning the prince. Still, the void in her heart required an object to fill it, and chance having thrown M. Charles Robert in her way during a morning call she was making at my house, she appeared struck with his appearance, much after the manner in which we are attracted by a fine picture. Unfortunately, however, this man is as silly as he is handsome, though he certainly has a very prepossessing *tout ensemble.* I praised him enthusiastically to Madame d'Harville, exalted the nobleness of his sentiments, the elevation of his mind, and, as I knew her weak side, I worked upon her sympathy and pity, by representing him as loaded with every trouble and affliction unrelenting fate could heap upon a devoted but most innocent head. I directed M. Robert to assume a melancholy and sentimental air; to utter only deep sighs; and to preserve a gloomy and unbroken silence in the presence of Madame d'Harville. He carefully pursued the path marked out by me, and, thanks to his vocal skill, his fine person, and the constant expression of silent suffering, so far engaged the interest of Madame d'Harville, that, ere long, she transferred to my handsome friend the warm and sympathising regard Rodolph had first awakened. Do you comprehend me thus far?"

"Perfectly; proceed."

"Madame d'Harville and Robert met only upon terms of intimacy at my house; to draw them more effectually together I projected devoting

three mornings in the week to music, and my mournful ally sighed softly as the breath of evening while turning over the leaves of the music,

ventured to utter a few impassioned words, and even to slip two or three billets among the pieces he copied out for the marquise to practise at home. I own I was more fearful of his epistolary efforts than even his powers of speech; but a woman always looks indulgently upon the first declaration of love she receives; so far, therefore, the written nonsense of my silly pupil did no harm, for, in obedience to my advice, his *billets doux* were very laconic. The great point was to obtain a rendezvous, and this was no easy matter, for Clémence's principles were stronger than her love; or, rather, her passion was not sufficiently deep to induce her to sacrifice those principles. Unknown, even to herself, the image of Rodolph still filled her heart, and seemed in a manner to preserve her from yielding to her weak fancy for M. Charles Robert—a fancy, as I

well knew, far more imaginary than real; but led on by my continual and exaggerated praises of this brainless Apollo, whom I persisted in describing as suffering under the daily increase of every imaginary evil I could invent, Clémence, vanquished by the deep despair of her dejected adorer, consented one day, more from pity than love, to grant him the rendezvous so long desired."

"Did she, then, make you her confidant?"

"She confessed to me her regard for M. Charles Robert—nothing more; neither did I seek to learn more, it would only have annoyed and vexed her. But, as for him, boiling over with love, or, rather, intoxicated with pride, he came voluntarily to impart his good fortune, without, however, intrusting me either with the time or place of the intended meeting."

"How, then, did you know it?"

"Why, Karl, by my order, hovered about the door of M. Robert during the following day from an early hour; nothing, however, transpired till the next day, when our love-stricken youth proceeded in a *fiacre* to an obscure part of the town, and finally alighted before a mean-looking house in the Rue du Temple; there he remained for an hour and a half, when he came out and walked away. Karl waited a long while to see whether any person followed M. Charles Robert out of the house; but no one came. The marquise had evidently failed in her appointment. This was confirmed to me on the morrow when the lover came to pour out all his rage and disappointment. I advised him to assume even an increase of wretchedness and despair. The plan succeeded—the pity of Clémence was again excited; and a fresh assignation was wrung from her, but which she failed to keep equally with the former: the third and last rendezvous, however, produced more decided effects, Madame d'Harville positively going as far as the door of the house I have specified as the appointed place; then, repenting so rash a step, returned home without having even quitted the humble *fiacre* in which she rode. You may judge by all these capricious changes of purpose how this woman struggles to be free. And wherefore? Why, because (and hence arises my bitter, deadly hatred to Clémence d'Harville) because the recollection of Rodolph still lingers in her heart, and, with pertinacious love she shrinks from aught that she fancies breathes of preference for another; thus shielding herself from harm or danger beneath his worshipped image. Now this very night the marquise has made a fresh assignation with M. Charles Robert for to-morrow, and this time I doubt not her punctuality: the Duke de Lucenay has so grossly ridiculed this young man that, carried away by pity for the humiliation of her admirer, the marquise has granted that to compassion he would not else have obtained. But this time, I feel persuaded, she will keep her word, and be punctual to the appointed time and hour."

"And how do you propose to act?"

"M. Charles Robert is so perfectly unable to comprehend the delicacy of feeling which this evening dictated the marquise's resolution of meeting him, that he is safe to rush with vulgar eagerness to the rendezvous, and this will effectually ruin his plans, for pity alone has instigated Clémence to take this compromising step. No love—no

infatuation has hurried her into a measure so fatal to her future resolution! I know every turn of her mind; and I am confident she will keep her appointment solely from a courageous idea of generous devotion, but with a firm resolve not for one instant to forget her duties as a wife and mother. Now the coarse, vulgar mind of M. Charles Robert is sure to take the fullest advantage of the marquise's concession in his favour. Clémence will detest him from that instant; and the illusion once destroyed which has bound herself and Charles Robert in bonds of imaginary sympathy, she will fall again beneath the influence of her love for Rodolph, which I am certain still nestles in her heart."

"Well?"

"Well! I would have her for ever lost to Rodolph, whose high sense of honour, and deep friendship for M. d'Harville I feel perfectly sure would

not have proved equal to preventing his returning the love of Clémence; but I will so manage things that he shall henceforward look upon her with loathing and disgust, as the guilty partner in a crime committed without his participation. No, no! I know my man. He might pardon the offence, but never the being excluded from his share in it."

"Then do you propose apprising the husband of all that is going on, so that the prince should learn the disgraceful circumstances from the publicity the affair would obtain?"

"I do. And the thing is so much the easier to accomplish as, from what fell from Clémence to-night, I can learn that the marquis has vague and undefined suspicions, without knowing on whom to fix them. It is now midnight, we shall almost directly leave the ball, I will set you down at the first *café* we meet with, whence you shall write M.

d'Harville a minute account of his wife's love affair, with the projected assignation of to-morrow, with the time and place where it is arranged to take place. Oh! but I forgot, I didn't state that the place of meeting is No. 17 Rue du Temple. And the time, to-morrow at one o'clock. The marquis is already jealous of Clémence, well, he will by this information surprise her under most suspicious circumstances: the rest follows as a matter of course."

"But this is a most abominable mode of action," said Seyton, coldly.

"What! my trusty and well-beloved brother and colleague growing scrupulous?" said Sarah, sarcastically. "This will never do; suppose my modes of action are odious—so be it. I trample on all and every thing that inteferes with my designs—agreed. I do—I shall, till I have secured my purpose. But let me ask you, Who thought of scruples when my destruction was aimed at? Who thought of me or my feelings? let me ask you. How have I been treated?"

"Say no more sister—say no more—here is my hand, and you may safely reckon upon my firm participation in all that concerns you, even to writing the letter to M. d'Harville. But still I say, and repeat such conduct is horrible!"

"Never mind sermonising, but say, do you consent fully and entirely to do what I wish you, or do you not? ay, or nay?"

"Since it must be so, M. d'Harville shall this night be fully instructed as to all his wife's proceedings—but—what is that? I fancied I heard some one on the other side of this thicket—there was a rustling of leaves and branches," said Seyton, interrupting himself, and speaking to Sarah in a low and suppressed voice."

"For Heaven's sake," cried Sarah, uneasily, "don't stop to talk about it, but quick! and examine the other side of this place."

Seyton rose—made the tour of the clump of trees—but saw no one.

Rodolph had just disappeared by the side-door of which we have before spoken.

"I must have made a mistake," said Seyton, returning, "there is no appearance of any persons but ourselves being in this place."

"I thought there could not possibly be."

"Now, then, Sarah, hear what I have got to say on the subject of Madame d'Harville, who, I feel quite satisfied, you make an object of unnecessary apprehension, as far as it would be possible for her to interfere with your schemes. The prince, moreover, has certain principles nothing would induce him to infringe. I am infinitely more alarmed, and with greater justice, too, as to what can have been his intentions in conducting that young girl to his farm at Bouqueval, five or six weeks ago. He is constant in his superintendance of her health and comfort; is having her well educated, and, moreover, has been several times to see her. Now we are altogether ignorant who she is or where she came from; she seems, however, to belong only to the humbler ranks of society; still the exquisite style of her beauty, the fact of the prince having worn the disguise he did when escorting her to the farm, the increasing interest he seems to take in her welfare, all go to prove that his regard for her is of no common description. I have, therefore, in this affair anticipated your wishes; but to remove this greater and, as I believe, more serious obstacle to our plans the utmost circumspection was requisite to obtain

information respecting the lives and habits of these mysterious occupants of the farm, and particularly concerning the girl herself. I have been fortunate enough to learn nearly sufficient to point out what is to be done the moment for action has arrived. A most singular chance threw that horrid old woman in my way, to whom, as you remember, I once gave my address, which she it seems has carefully preserved. Her connexion with such persons as the robber who attacked us during our late visit to the Cité will powerfully assist us. All is provided for and preconsidered —there can be no proof against us—and, besides, if, as seems evident, this young creature belongs to the humblest class of society it is not very probable she will hesitate between our offers and the splendid prospect she may, perchance, picture to herself, for the prince, I have ascertained, has preserved a strict incognito towards her. But to-morrow shall decide the question otherwise —— we shall see—we shall see."

"And these two obstacles overcome, then, Tom, for our grand project!"

"There are many, and serious obstacles in the way; still they may be overcome."

"And would it not be a lucky chance if we should bring it to pass at the very moment when Rodolph would be writhing under the double misery occasioned by the disclosure of Madame d'Harville's conduct, and the disappearance of the creature for whom he chooses to evince so deep an interest? Would not that be an auspicious moment to persuade him that the daughter, whose loss he daily more and more deplores, still lives? and then ——"

"Silence, sister," interrupted Seyton, "I hear the steps of the guests from the supper-table, returning to resume the ball. Since you deem it expedient to apprize the Marquis d'Harville of the morrow's rendezvous, let us depart: it is past midnight."

"The lateness of the hour in which the anonymous information will reach M. d'Harville, will but tend still more to impress him with an idea of its importance."

And with these words Tom and Sarah quitted the splendid ball of the ambassadress of the court of * * * *.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

DETERMINED at all risks to warn Madame d'Harville of the danger she was incurring, Rodolph had quitted the winter-garden without waiting to hear the remainder of the conversation between Sarah and her brother, thus remaining ignorant of their designs against Fleur-de-Marie, and of the extreme peril which threatened the poor girl. But, spite of his earnest desire to apprise the marquise of the plot laid against her peace and honour, he was unable to carry his design into execution, for Madame d'Harville, unable to bear up longer after the trying events of the evening, had abandoned her original intention of visiting the entertainment given by Madame de Nerval and gone direct home.

This *contretemps* ruined his hopes. Nearly the whole of the company present at the ambassadress's ball had been invited to that of Madame de Nerval's, and Rodolph drove rapidly thither, taking with him M. de Graün; to whom he gave instructions to look for Madame d'Harville among the guests, and to acquaint her that the prince, having something of the utmost consequence to communicate to her without the least delay, would walk onwards to the Hôtel d'Harville, and await her return home, when he would say a few words at the carriage-door while her servants were attending to the opening of the entrance-gates.

After much time spent in fruitless endeavours to find Madame d'Harville, De Graün was compelled to return with the account of his ill success. This failure made Rodolph despair of being able, now, to save the marquise from impending ruin: his first thought had been to warn her of the treachery intended, and so prevent the statement of Sarah, which he had no means of keeping from the hands of M. d'Harville, from obtaining the slightest credence. Alas! it was now too late. The infamous epistle dictated by the Countess Macgregor had reached the Marquis d'Harville shortly after midnight on the night in question.

* * * * * *

It was morning; and M. d'Harville continued slowly to pace his sleeping apartment, the bed of which gave no indication of having been used during the night; though the silken counterpane hung in fragments, evidently proving that some powerful and devastating storm had possessed the mind of its owner.

The chamber in question was furnished with elegant simplicity, its only ornaments consisting of a stand of modern arms and a range of shelves furnished with a well-chosen collection of books. Yet a sudden phrenzy, or the hand of ungovernable rage, had reduced the quiet elegance which ordinarily reigned to a scene of frantic disorder. Chairs, tables, broken and overset; the carpet strewed with fragments of the crystal lamp kept burning through the night; the wax-lights and gilded chandelier which had contained them lying around, gave manifest evidence of a fearful scene.

M. d'Harville was about thirty years of age, with a fine, manly countenance, whose usual expression was mild and prepossessing, but now contracted, haggard, and livid. He had not changed his dress since the preceding evening; his throat was bare, his waistcoat thrown open, and on the torn and rumpled cambric of his shirt-front were drops of blood. His rich, dark hair which generally fell in curls around his face now hung in tangled wildness over his pale countenance. Wholly buried in the misery of his own thoughts, with folded arms, drooping head, and fixed bloodshot eyes, M. d'Harville continued to pace his chamber; then stopping opposite his fire-place in which, spite of the almost unendurable severity of the frost of the past night, the fire had been allowed to expire, he took from the marble mantel-piece the following brief note, which he continued to read over and over with the most eager attention by the wan, pale light of the cold glimmer of an early winter-morning:—

"To-morrow, at one o'clock, your wife has appointed to meet her favoured lover. Go to the Rue du Temple, No. 17, and you will obtain every requisite confirmation of this intelligence.

"FROM ONE WHO PITIES YOU."

Whilst reading these words, perused with such deep anguish, and sickness of heart, so many times through the long midnight hours, the blue, cold lips of M. d'Harville appeared convulsively to spell each syllable of this fatal *billet*.

At this moment the chamber-door opened and a servant entered: the

man who now made his appearance was old, even grey-headed, but the expression of his countenance was frank and honest. The noise of the man entering disturbed not the marquis from his bitter contemplations; he merely turned his head without altering his position, but still grasped the letter in his clenched hands.

"What do you want?" inquired he, sternly, of the servant.

The man, instead of answering, continued to gaze with an air of painful surprise at the disordered state of the room; then, regarding his master more attentively, exclaimed,—

"Blood on your clothes! my lord, my lord! how is this? you have hurt yourself;—and all alone too—why, my lord, did you not summon me, as of old, when these attacks came on?"

"Begone!"

"I intreat your lordship's pardon, but your fire is out—the cold is intense—indeed, I must remind your lordship that after your late—your ——"

"Will you be silent? leave me I say!"

"Pray do not be angry, my lord," replied the trembling valet; "but, if your lordship pleases to recollect, you appointed M. Doublet to be here to day at half past ten, and he is now waiting with the notary."

"Quite proper," said the marquis, with a bitter smile; "when a man is rich he ought, he should look carefully to his affairs. Fortune is a fine thing—a very fine thing; or would be if it could but purchase happiness." Then, resuming a cold and collected manner, he added,—

"Shew M. Doublet into my study."

"I have done so, my lord marquis."

"Then give me my clothes—quick, I am in haste—I shall be going out shortly. I ——"

"But if your lordship would only ——"

"Do as I desire you, Joseph," said M. d'Harville, in a more gentle tone; then added,—"Is your lady stirring yet?"

"I have not yet heard her ladyship's bell, my lord marquis."

"Let me know when she rings."

"I will, my lord."

"Heaven and earth, man, how slow you are!" exclaimed M. d'Harville, whose raging thoughts almost chafed him into madness: "summon Philip to assist you: you will keep me all day."

"My lord, please to allow me to set matters a little straight first," replied Joseph, sorrowfully; "I would much rather no one but myself witnessed the state of your chamber, or they would wonder, and talk about it, because they could not understand what had taken place during the night, my lord."

"And if they were to find out, it would be a most shocking affair,—would it not?" asked M. d'Harville, in a tone of gloomy irony.

"Thank God, my lord, not a soul in the house has the least suspicion of it!"

"No one suspects it," repeated M. d'Harville, despondingly, "no one—that's well, for her at least—well, let us hope to keep the secret."

And, while Joseph was occupying himself in repairing the havoc in his master's apartment, D'Harville walked up to the stage of arms we before mentioned; examined them with an expression of deep interest, then, turning towards Joseph, with a sinister smile, said,—

"I hope you have not omitted to clean the guns which are placed at the top of the stand—I mean those in my hunting-case."

"I had not your lordship's orders to do so," replied the astonished servant.

"You had, sir! and have neglected them!"

"I humbly assure you, my lord!"

"They must be in a fine state!"

"Your lordship will please to bear in mind that it is scarcely a month since they were regularly repaired and put in order for use by the gunsmith."

"Never mind! As soon as I am dressed reach down my shooting-case; I will examine the guns myself. I may very possibly go out shooting either to-morrow or next day."

"I will reach them down directly, my lord."

The chamber being by this time replaced in its ordinary state, a second *valet de chambre* was summoned to assist Joseph.

His toilette concluded, M. d'Harville repaired to his study, where the steward (M. Doublet) and his lawyer's clerk were awaiting him.

"We have brought the agreement that my lord marquis may hear it read over," said the bowing clerk; "my lord will then only have to sign it, and the affair is concluded.

"Have you perused it, M. Doublet?"

"I have, my lord, attentively."

" In that case I will affix my signature at once."

The necessary forms completed, the clerk withdrew, when M. Doublet, rubbing his hands, and looking triumphantly, exclaimed,—

" Now, then, by this last addition to your lordship's estates your manorial property cannot be less than a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs per annum, in round numbers. And permit me to say, my lord marquis, that a rent-roll of a hundred and twenty-six thousand francs per annum is of no common occurrence now-a-days."

" I am a happy man, am I not, M. Doublet? A hundred and twenty-six thousand livres per annum! Surely the man owning such an income must be blessed indeed!—sorrow or care cannot reach him through so golden a shield."

" And that is wholly independent of my lord's funded property, amounting at least to two millions more; or reckoning ——"

" Exactly; I know what you would say:—without reckoning my other blessings and comforts."

" Why, Heaven be praised, your lordship is as rich in all earthly blessings as in revenue. Not a precious gift but it has been largely bestowed upon you; ay, and such as even money will not buy: youth, uninterrupted health, the power of enjoying every happiness, amongst which, or, rather, at the head of which," said M. Doublet, gracefully smiling, and gallantly bowing, " place that of being the husband of so sweet a lady as madame la marquise, and the parent of a lovely little girl, who might be mistaken for a cherubim."

M. d'Harville cast a look of gloomy mistrust on the poor steward; who, revelling in his own ecstasy at seeing the princely rent-roll committed to his charge, exceeding all others in magnificent amount, was far from perceiving the scowling brow of his master, thus congratulated on being the happiest man alive, when, to his own view, a verier wretch, or more complete bankrupt in happiness existed not. Striking M. Doublet familiarly on the shoulder, and breaking into a wild, ironical laugh, M. d'Harville rejoined,—

"Then you think that with an income of two hundred and sixty thousand livres, a wife like mine, and a daughter resembling a cherubim, a man has nothing more to wish for?"

"Nay, my lord," replied the steward, with honest zeal, "you have still to wish for the blessing of lengthened days that you may be spared to see mademoiselle married as happily as yourself. Ah! my lord, I may not hope to see it, but I should be thankful to witness you and my honoured lady surrounded by your grandchildren—ay, and great-grandchildren too—why not?"

"Excellent! Monsieur Doublet: a regular Baucis and Philemon idea. You have always a capital illustration to your ideas."

"You are too good to me my lord. Has your lordship any further orders for me?"

"None. Stay, though; what cash have you in hand?"

"Twenty-nine thousand three hundred and odd francs for current expenses, my lord marquis; but there is a heavy sum at the bank belonging to this quarter's income."

"Well, bring me twenty thousand francs in gold, and, should I have gone out, give them to Joseph for me."

"Does your lordship wish for them this morning?"

"I do."

"Within an hour the gold shall be here. You have nothing else to say to me, my lord?"

"No, Monsieur Doublet."

"A hundred and twenty-six thousand francs per annum, wholly unincumbered," repeated the steward, as he was about to quit the room; "this is a glorious day for me to see; I almost feared at one time that we should not secure this desirable property. Your lordship's most humble servant, I take my leave."

"Good morning, M. Doublet."

As the door closed upon the steward M. d'Harville, overcome with the mental agony he had repressed thus far, threw himself into an armchair, leaned his elbows on the desk before which he sat, and covering his face with his hands, for the first time since receiving the fatal *billet*, gave vent to a flood of hot, burning tears.

"Cruel mockery of fate," cried he, at length, "to have made me rich, but have given me only shame and dishonour to place within the gilded frame: the perjury of Clémence, the disgrace which will descend upon my innocent child. Can I suffer this? or shall I for the sake of her unoffending offspring spare the guilty mother from the opprobrium of an exposure?" Then rising suddenly from his seat, with sparkling eyes and clenched teeth he cried in a deep, determined voice,—"No, no!—blood, blood!—the fearful protection from laughter and derision. Ah! full well I can now comprehend her coldness, her antipathy, wretched, wretched woman!" Then, stopping all at once, as though melted by some tender recollection, he resumed, in a hoarse tone,—"Aversion! alas! too well I know its cause. I inspire her with loathing, with disgust!" Then, after a lengthened silence, he cried, in a voice broken by sighs,—"Yet, was it my fault or my misfortune? should she have wronged me thus for a calamity beyond my power to avert? surely I am a more fitting object for her pity than scorn and hatred." Again re-kindling into his excited

feelings, he reiterated,—"Nothing but blood,—the blood of both can wash out this guilty stain! Doubtless HE the favoured lover has been informed why she flies her husband's arms."

This latter thought redoubled the fury of the marquis. He elevated his tightly compressed hands towards Heaven, as though invoking its

vengeance; then, passing his burning fingers over his eyes as he recollected the necessity that existed for concealing his emotion from the servants of his establishment, he returned to his sleeping apartment with an appearance of perfect tranquillity. There he found Joseph.

"Well, in what state are the guns?"

"In perfect order. Please to examine them, my lord."

"I came for the purpose of so doing. Has your lady yet rang?"

"I do not know, my lord."

"Then inquire."

Directly the servant had quitted the room, M. d'Harville hastily took from the gun-case a small powder-flask, some balls and caps; then, locking the case, put the key in his pocket. Then going to the stand of arms, he took from it a pair of moderate-sized Manton's pistols, loaded them, and placed them without difficulty in the pockets of his morning-wrapper. Joseph returned with the intimation that Madame d'Harville was in her dressing-room.

"Has your lady ordered her carriage?"

"My lord, I heard Mademoiselle Juliette say to the head-coachman, when he came to inquire her ladyship's orders for the day, that, "as it was cold, dry walking, if her ladyship went out at all, she would prefer going on foot."

"Very well! Stay—I forgot! I shall not go out hunting before to-morrow, or probably, next day. Desire Williams to look the small travelling britcska carefully over. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, my lord; it shall be attended to. Will not your lordship require a stick?"

"No! Pray tell me is there not a hackney-coach-stand near here?"

"Quite close, my lord;—in the Rue de Lille."

After a moment's hesitation, the marquis continued: "Go and inquire of Mademoiselle Juliette whether Madame d'Harville can see me for a few minutes." Joseph obeyed.

"Yes," murmured the marquis, "I well see the cause of all my misery —my disgrace. I will contemplate the guilty mask beneath which the impure heart conceals its adulterous designs. I will listen to the false

lips that speak the words of innocence, while deep dishonour lurks in the candid smile—a smile that seemed to me as that of an angel. Yet 'tis an appalling spectacle to watch the words—the looks—of one who, breathing only the sentiments of a chaste wife and mother, is about to sully your name with one of those deep, deadly stains which can only be washed out in blood. Fool that I am to give her the chance of again bewildering my senses! She will look at me with her accustomed sweetness and candour; greet me (all guilty as she is) with the same pure smile she bestows upon her child, as, kneeling at her lap, it lisps its early prayer. That look—those eyes, mirrors of the soul!—the more modest and pure the glance (D'Harville shuddered with contempt), the greater must be the innate corruption and falsehood! Alas! she has proved herself a consummate dissembler; and I—*I*—have been the veriest dupe! Only let me consider with what sentiments must that woman look upon me, if just previous to her meeting with her favoured lover I pay her my accustomed visit, and express my usual devotion and love for *her!*—the young, the virtuous wife—the tender, sensible, and devoted mother, as until this wretched moment I would have died to prove her. Can I, dare I, trust myself in her presence, with the knowledge of her being but too impatient for the arrival of that blessed hour which conveys her to her guilty rendezvous and infamous paramour! Oh! Clémence, Clémence!—you in whom all my hopes and fondest affections were placed, is this a just return? No! no! no!" again repeated M. d'Harville, with rapidly returning excitement. "False, treacherous woman! I will not see you! I will not trust my ears to your feigned words! Nor you, my child. At the sight of your innocent countenance I should unman myself, and compromise my just revenge."

Quitting his apartment, M. d'Harville, instead of repairing to those of la marquise, contented himself with leaving a message for her through Mademoiselle Juliette, to the effect that he wished a short conversation with Madame d'Harville, but that being obliged to go out just then, he should be glad, if it assorted with Madame la Marquise's perfect convenience, to breakfast with her at twelve o'clock.

"And so," said the unhappy M. d'Harville, "fancying that after twelve o'clock I shall be safe at home, she will consider herself more at liberty to follow out her own plans."

He then repaired to the coach-stand contiguous to his mansion, and summoned a vehicle from the ranks.

"Now, coachee," said he, affecting to disguise his rank, "what's o'clock?"

"All right, master," said the man, drawing up to the side of the footway, "where am I to drive to? Let's have a right understanding, and a look at the clock. Why, it is as close upon half-after eleven as may be."

"Now then, drive to the corner of the Rue Saint Dominique, and wait at the end of the garden wall which runs along there—do you understand?"

"Yes, yes—I know."

M. d'Harville then drew down the blinds of the *fiacre;* the coachman drove on, and soon arrived opposite the Hotel d'Harville, from which

point of observation it was impossible for any person to enter or quit the house without the marquis having a full view of them. One o'clock was the hour fixed in the note; and with his eyes rivetted on the entrance-gates of the mansion, the marquis waited in painful suspense, absorbed in a whirl of fearful thoughts and maddening conjectures. Time stole on imperceptibly; twelve o'clock reverberated from the dome of Saint Thomas Aquinas, when the door opened slowly at the Hotel d'Harville, and Madame d'Harville herself came timidly forth.

"Already!" exclaimed the unhappy husband; "how punctual she is!" She fears to keep HIM waiting," cried the marquis, with a mixture of irony and savage rage.

The cold was excessive; the pavement hard and dry. Clémence was dressed in a black velvet bonnet, covered with a veil of the same colour, and a thickly-wadded pelisse of dark ruby satin, a large shawl of

dark blue cachemire fell to the very hem of her pelisse, which she lightly and gracefully held up while crossing the street. Thanks to this movement, the taper foot and graceful ancle of Madame d'Harville, cased in an exquisitely-fitting boot of black satin, were exposed to view.

It was strange that amid the painful and bewildering ideas that crowded the brain of D'Harville, he should have found one thought to waste upon the beauty of his wife's foot; but so it was; and at the moment that was about to separate them for ever, to his eager gaze, that fairy foot and well-turned ancle had never looked so charming; and then, as by a rapid train of thought he recalled the matchless loveliness of his wife, and as he had ever believed till now her purity, her mental graces, he groaned aloud as he remembered that another was preferred to him, and that the light figure that glided on before his fixed gaze, was but the hollow spectre of fallen goodness, a lost, degraded creature, hastening to steep her husband and infant in irremediable disgrace, for the indulging of a base and guilty passion. Even in that wretched moment he felt how dearly, how *exclusively* he had loved her; and for the first time during the blow which had fallen on him, he knew that he mourned the lovely woman almost equally with the virtuous mother and chaste wife. A cry of rage and mingled fury escaped him, as he pictured the rapture of her meeting with the lover of her choice; and a sharp, darting pain quivered through his heart as he remembered that Clémence, with all her youth and beauty, her countless charms, both of body and mind, was lost to him for ever.

Hitherto his passionate grief had been unmixed by any alloy of self. He had bewailed the sanctity of the marriage-vow trampled under foot, the abandonment of all sworn and sacred duties; but his sufferings of rage, jealousy, and regret, almost overpowered him, and with much difficulty was he able to command his voice sufficiently to say to the coachman, while partially drawing up the blind,—

"Do you see that lady in the blue shawl and black bonnet walking along by the wall?"

"Yes, yes!—I see her safe enough."

"Well then, go slowly along, and keep up with her. Should she go to the coach-stand I had you from, pull up; and when she has got into a *fiacre*, follow it wherever it goes."

"All right—I understand! Now this is what I call a good joke!"

M. d'Harville had conjectured rightly. Madame d'Harville repaired directly to the coach-stand; and beckoning a *fiacre* off the stand, instantly got in, and drove off, closely followed by the vehicle containing her husband.

They had proceeded but a very short distance, when the coachman took the road to the church of Saint Thomas d'Aquinas, and, to the surprise of M. d'Harville, pulled up directly in front.

"What is this for? What are you about?"

"Why, master, the lady you told me to follow has just alighted here, and a smart, tidy leg and foot of her own she has got. Her dress somehow caught; so, you see, I couldn't help having a peep, nohow. This is downright good fun though, this is!"

A thousand varied thoughts agitated M. d'Harville. One minute he fancied that his wife, fearing pursuit, had taken this step to escape detection; then hope whispered that the letter which had given him so much uneasiness, might after all be only an infamous calumny; for if guilty, what could be gained by this false assumption of piety? Would it

not be a species of sacrilegious mockery? At this suggestion a bright ray of hope shot across the troubled mind of M. d'Harville, arising from the striking contrast between Clémence's present occupation and the crime alleged as her motive for quitting her home. Alas! this consolatory illusion was speedily destroyed. Leaning in at the open window the coachman observed,—

"I say, master, that nice little woman you are after has got back into her coach."

"Then follow quickly."

"I'm off! Now this is what I call downright good fun. Capital!—hang me if it a'nt."

The vehicle reached the Quais, the Hôtel de Ville, the Rue Sainte Avoye, and, at last, Rue de Temple.

"I say," said the coachman, turning round to speak to M. d'Harville from his seat, "master, just look. My mate, there, has stopped at No. 17; we are about at 13. Shall I stop here or go on to 17?"

"Stop here."

"I say—look'ee;—you'll lose your pretty lady. She has gone into the alley leading to No. 17."

"Open the door."

"I'm coming, sir."

And quickly following the steps of his wife, M. d'Harville entered the obscure passage up which she had disappeared. Madame d'Harville, however, had so far the start as to have entered the house previously.

Attracted by the most devouring curiosity, Madame Pipelet, with her melancholy Alfred and her friend the oyster-woman, were huddled close together on the sill at the lodge door. The staircase was so dark that a

person just emerging from the daylight into the gloom of the passage could not discern a single step of it; and Madame d'Harville, agitated and almost sinking with apprehension, found herself constrained to apply

to Madame Pipelet for further advice how to proceed, saying, in a low, tremulous voice,—

"Which way must I turn, madam, to find the staircase of the house?"

"Stop, if you please. Pray, whom do you want?"

"I wish to go to the apartments of M. Charles, madam."

"Monsieur who?" repeated the old woman, feigning not to have heard her, but in reality to afford sufficient leisure to her husband and her friend thoroughly to scrutinise the unhappy woman's countenance, even through the folds of her thick veil.

"M. Charles, madam," repeated Clémence, in a low, trembling tone, and bending down her head, so as to escape the rude and insolent examination to which her features were subjected.

"Ah! M. Charles; very well: you should have spoken so that one could hear you. Well, my pretty dear, if you want M. Charles,—and a good-looking fellow he is as ever won a woman's heart,—go straight on, and the door will stare you in the face. Eh! eh! eh!" laughed out the old woman, shaking her fat sides with spiteful glee, "it seems he has not waited for nothing this time. Success to love and love-makings, and a merry end to it!"

The marquise, ready to sink with confusion, began slowly to grope her way up the dingy staircase.

"I say," bawled out the old shell-fish woman, "our commandant knows what he is about—don't he? Leave him alone to choose a pretty girl. His marm is a regular swell—a'nt she?"

Had it not been requisite for her to run the gauntlet of the trio who occupied the entrance-door, Madame d'Harville, ready to sink with shame and terror, would gladly have retraced her steps. She made another effort, and at last reached the landing-place, where, to her unutterable consternation and surprise, she saw Rodolph waiting impatiently her arrival. Instantly flying to meet her, he hastily placed a purse in her hand, saying, in a hurried manner,—

"Your husband knows all, and is now following your very steps."

At this instant, the sharp tones of Madame Pipelet were heard crying out, "Where are you going to, sir?"

"'Tis he!" exclaimed Rodolph, and then, almost forcing Madame d'Harville up the second staircase, he added, in a rapid manner, "make all haste to the very top of the house: on the fifth floor you will find a wretched family, named Morel. Remember your sole business in coming hither was to relieve their distress."

"I tell you, sir, screamed Madame Pipelet, "that unless you tell me your name, you shall trample over me, as they walked over our brave men at Waterloo, before I let you pass."

Having, from the entrance to the alley, observed Madame d'Harville stop to speak to the porteress, the marquis had likewise prepared himself to pass through some sort of questioning.

"I belong to the lady who just now entered," said the marquis.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, looking the picture of wonderment, "why, that, of course, is a satisfactory answer. You can pass on, if you please."

Hearing an unusual stir, M. Charles Robert had set the door of his

apartments ajar, and Rodolph, unwilling to be recognised by M. d'Harville, whose quick, searching eye might have detected him, spite of the murkiness of the staircase, hearing him rapidly ascending the stairs, just as he reached the landing-place, dashed into the chamber of the astonished commandant, locking the door after him. M. Charles Robert, magnificently attired in his *robe de chambre*, of scarlet damask, with orange-coloured stripes, and Greek cap of embroidered velvet, was struck with astonishment at the unexpected appearance of Rodolph, whom he had not seen the preceding evening at the embassy, and who was upon the present occasion very plainly dressed.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" asked he at length, assuming a tone of killing haughtiness.

"Be silent!" replied Rodolph; and there was that in his voice and manner that Charles Robert obeyed, even in spite of his own determination to strike terror into the bold invader of his private moments.

A violent and continued noise, as of some heavy substance falling from one stair to the other, resounded through the dull silence of the gloomy staircase.

"Unhappy man! he has murdered her!" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Murdered!" ejaculated M. Charles Robert, turning very pale, "for the love of Heaven, what is all this about?"

But, without heeding his inquiry, Rodolph partially opened the door, and discovered little Tortillard half rolling, half limping, down the stairs, holding in his hand the red silk purse Rodolph had just given to Madame d'Harville. Tortillard, with another scrambling shuffle, disappeared at the bottom of the last flight of stairs. The light step of Madame d'Harville, and the heavier tread of her husband, as he continued his pursuit of

her from one story to another, could be distinctly heard. Somewhat relieved of his worst fears, yet unable to make out by what chance the purse so recently committed to Madame d'Harville's hands should have been transferred to those of Tortillard, Rodolph said, authoritatively, to M. Robert,—

"Do not think of quitting your apartments, for the next hour, I request!"

"Upon my life and soul, that is a pretty thing to say to a gentleman in his own house," replied M. Robert in an impatient and wrathful tone. "I ask you, again, what is the meaning of all this? Who the devil are you, sir? and how dare you dictate to me, a gentleman?"

"M. d'Harville is informed of every thing—has followed his wife to your very door—and is now pursuing her to the upper part of the house."

"God bless me! here's a situation!" exclaimed Charles Robert, with an appearance of utter consternation. "But what is to be done?—what is the use of her going up stairs?—and how will she manage to get down again unobserved?"

"Remain where you are, neither speak nor move until the porteress comes to you," rejoined Rodolph, who hastened to give his final instructions to Madame Pipelet, leaving the commandant a prey to the most alarming apprehensions.

"Well!—well!" cried Madame Pipelet, her face radiant with chuckling exultation; "there's rare sport going on! The lady who came to visit my fine gentleman on the first floor has been followed by another gentleman, who seems rather in a passion—the husband of that silly young creature, I make no doubt. Directly the truth flashed across me, I tells him to go straight up; for, thinks I, he'll be sure to murder our commandant. That 'll make a deal of talk in the neighbourhood; and folks will come crowding to see the house, just as they did at No. 36 after the man was killed there. Lord! I wonder the fighting has not begun yet. I have been listening to hear them set to; but I can't catch the least sound."

"My dear Madame Pipelet, will you do me a great favour?" said Rodolph, putting five louis into her hand. "When this lady comes down stairs, ask her how she found the poor Morels. Tell her she has performed an act of real charity in coming to see them, according to her promise, the last time she called to inquire respecting them."

Madame Pipelet looked first at the money and then at Rodolph, with an air of petrified astonishment.

"What am I to do with this money?" inquired she, at length; "do you give it me? Ah, I see! This handsome lady, then, does not come altogether for the commandant?"

"The gentleman who followed her was her husband, as you justly supposed; but, being warned in time, the poor lady went straight on to the Morels, as though her only business here was to afford them succour. Now do you understand?"

"I should think I did—clear as noonday. 'A nod is as good as a wink,' as the old woman said. I know! You want me to help you cheat the husband? Lord bless you! I'm up to all those things;—quick as lightning—silent as the grave! Go along with you! I'm a regular

good hand at keeping husbands in the dark; you might fancy I'd been used to it all my life. But tell me——"

The huge hat of M. Pipelet was here observed sending its dark shadow across the floor of the lodge.

"Anastasia," said Alfred, gravely, "you are like M. César Bradamanti; you have no respect for any thing or any body. And let me tell you that there are subjects that should never be made the subject of a jest, even amongst the most familiar acquaintances."

"Nonsense, my old darling. Don't stand there rolling up your eyes, and looking about as wise as a pig in a pound. You know well enough I was only joking; you know well enough that no living soul beneath the canopy of heaven can ever say I gave him a liberty. But that'll do; so let's talk of this good gentleman's business. Suppose I do go out of my usual way to save this young lady, I'm sure I do it solely to oblige our new lodger, who, for his generosity, may well deserve to be called the king of lodgers." Then, turning towards Rodolph, she added, "You shall see how cleverly I will go to work. Just hide yourself there in that corner behind the curtain. Quick — quick!—I hear them coming."

Rodolph had scarcely time to conceal himself ere Monsieur and Madame d'Harville descended the stairs. The features of the marquis shone with happiness, mingled with a confused and astonished expression, while the countenance of his wife, as she hung on his arm, looked calm but pale.

"Well, my good lady," cried Madame Pipelet, going out of her lodge to address her, as she descended the last stair, "how did you find the poor creatures—I mean the Morels? Ah, I doubt not, such a sight made your heart ache! God knows your charity was well bestowed! I told you the other day, when you called to inquire about them, what a state of starvation and misery they were in. Be assured, kind lady, these poor things are fit objects of your bounty; you will never have to regret coming to this out-of-the-way place to examine into their case. They really are deserving all your kindness—don't you think so, Alfred?"

Alfred, the strictness of whose ideas touching a due regard for all conjugal duties made him revolt at the thoughts of helping to deceive a husband, replied only by a sort of grumbling sound, as vague as discordant.

"Please to excuse my husband, madam," resumed Madame Pipelet; "he has got the cramp in his stomach, and cannot speak loud enough to be understood, or he would tell you as well as myself that the poor people you have so fortunately relieved will pray of the Almighty, night and day, to bless and reward you, my worthy lady."

M. d'Harville gazed on his wife with feelings approaching to adoration, as he exclaimed, "Angel of goodness, how has base slander dared to disturb your heavenly work!"

"An angel!" repeated Madame Pipelet; "that she is, and one of the very best Heaven could send. There is not a better."

"Let us return home, I entreat!" said Madame d'Harville, who was suffering acutely under the restraint she had put upon herself since entering the house, and, now that the necessity for exertion was over, found her strength rapidly forsaking her.

"Instantly," replied the marquis.

At the instant of their emerging into the open air from the obscurity of the alley, M. d'Harville, observing the pale looks of his wife, said tenderly,—

"Ah, Clémence, I have deep cause to solicit your pity and forgiveness."

"Alas! my lord," said the marquise, sighing deeply, "which of us has not need of pardon?"

Rodolph quitted his hiding-place, deeply ruminating upon so terrible a scene, thus intermingled with absurdity and coarseness, and pondering over the curious termination to a drama, the commencement of which had called forth such different passions.

"Well, now," exclaimed Madame Pipelet, "you must say I played my part well. Didn't I send that donkey of a husband home with longer ears than he came out with? Lord bless you! he'll put his wife under a glass-case, and worship her from this day forward. Poor, dear gentleman!

I really could not help feeling sorry for him. Oh! but about your furniture, M. Rodolph; it has not come yet."

"I am now going to see about it."

"By the by, you had better go and inform the commandant that he may venture out."

"True; I'll go and let the caged bird out. But what stuff and nonsense for him to hire apartments of no more use to him than they are to the King of Prussia! He is a fine fellow, he is, with his paltry twelve francs a-month. This is the fourth time he has been made a fool of."

Rodolph quitted the house, and Madame Pipelet, turning to her husband, said, with a chuckling laugh, "Now, Alfred, the commandant's turn has come;—now for it! I mean to have a jolly good laugh at my gentleman—up and dressed for nothing."

Arrived at the apartments of M. Charles Robert, the porteress rang the bell; the door was opened by the commandant himself.

"Commandant!" said Anastasie, giving him a military salute, by placing the back of her little fat hand against the front of her wig, "I have come to set you free. Your friends have gone away arm in arm, happy as doves, under your very nose. Well, you are out of a nice mess, thanks to M. Rodolph. You ought to stand something very handsome to him for all he has done upon the present occasion."

"Then this slim individual with the moustachios is called M. Rodolph, is he?"

"Exactly so; neither more nor less."

"And who and what is the fellow?"

"Fellow, indeed!" cried Madame Pipelet, in a wrathful voice; "he is as good as other men—better than some I could mention. Why, he is a travelling clerk, but the very king of lodgers; for, though he has only one room, he does not haggle and beat folks down—not he. Why, he gave me six francs for doing for him—six francs, mind, I say, without a word. Think of that!—without ever offering me a sous less. Oh, he is a lodger! I wish other people were at all like him!"

"There—there—that's enough; take the key."

"Shall I light the fire to-morrow, commandant?"

"No!"

"Next day?"

"No, no!—don't bother me."

"I say, commandant, if you recollect, I warned you that you would have your trouble for your pains."

M. Charles Robert threw a glance at his grinning tormentor that spoke of annihilation at least, and, dashing furiously by her, quitted the house, wondering much how a mere clerk should have become acquainted with his assignation with the Marquise d'Harville.

As the commandant left the alley, Tortillard came hobbling along.

"Well, what do you want?" said Madame Pipelet.

"Has the Borgnesse been to call upon me?" asked the young scamp, without attending to the porteress's question.

"The Chouette? No, you ugly monster! what should she come for?"

"Why to take me with her into the country, to be sure," said Tortillard, swinging on the lodge-gate.

"And what does your master say to it?"

"Oh! father managed all that. He sent this morning to M. Bradamanti, to ask him to give me leave to go in the country — the country — the country," sung or rather screamed the amiable scion of M. Bras Rouge, beating time most melodiously on the window-panes.

"Will you leave off, you young rascal, or are you going to break my window? Oh, here comes a coach!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" shrieked the urchin; "it is my dear Chouette! Oh, how nice the ride in a coach!"

And, looking through the window, they saw reflected upon the red blind of the opposite glass the hideous profile of the Borgnesse. She beckoned to Tortillard, who ran out to her. The coachman descended from his box, and opened the door; Tortillard sprung into the vehicle, which instantly drove off.

Another person beside the Chouette was in the carriage. In the further corner, and wrapped in an old cloak with a furred collar, his features shrouded by a black silk cap pulled down over his brows, sat the Schoolmaster. His inflamed lids formed a horrible contrast with the white globeless space beneath; and this fearful spectacle was rendered still more hideous by the action of the severe cold upon his seamed and frightful countenance.

"Now, small boy, squat yourself down on the pins of my man; you'll serve to keep him warm," said the Borgnesse to Tortillard, who crouched like a dog close to the feet of the Schoolmaster and the Chouette.

"Now then, my coves," said the driver, "on we go to the KEN at Bouqueval, don't we, La Chouette? You shall see whether I can *tool a drag* or not."

"And keep your pads on the move, my fine fellow; for we must get hold of the girl to-night."

"All right, my blind 'un; we'll go the pace."

"Shall I give you a hint?" said the Schoolmaster.

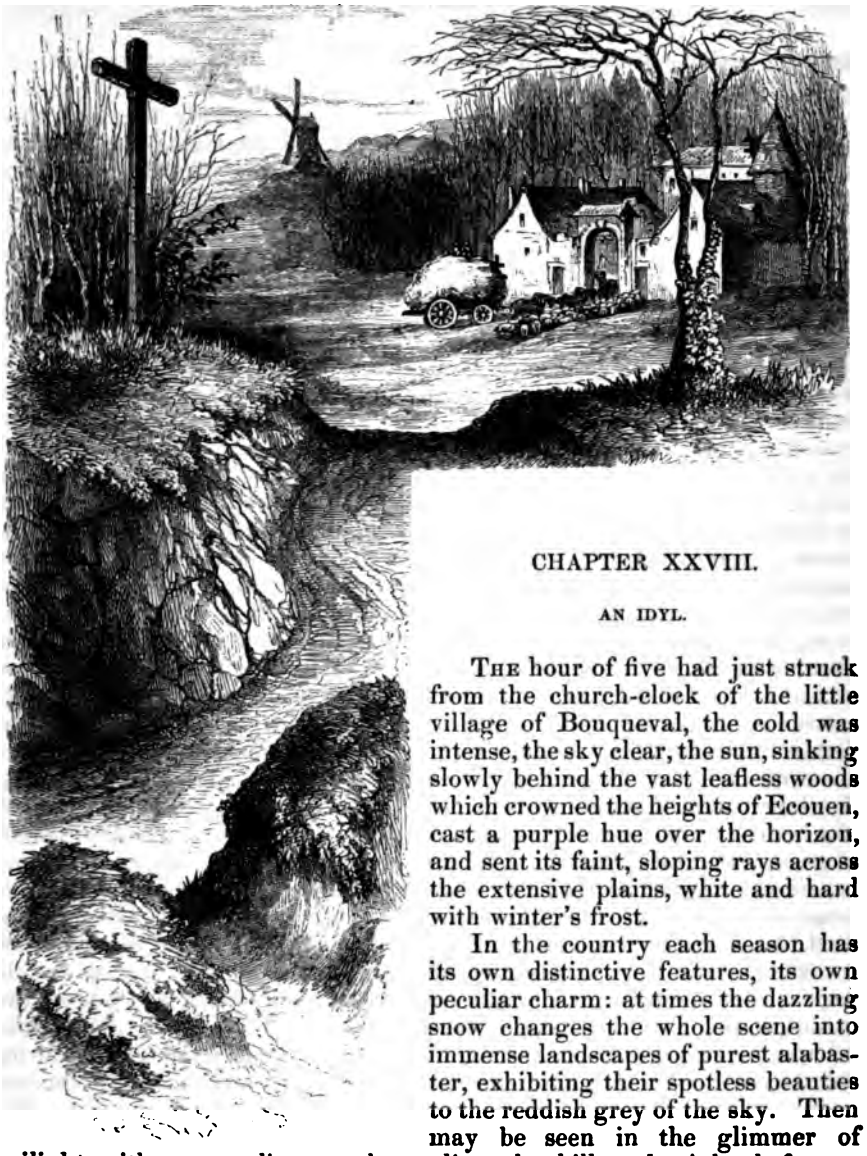
"What about?"

"Why, cut it fine as you pass by the NABS at the barrier; the meeting might lead to disagreeable recollections. It is not every old acquaintance it is worth while to renew our friendship with. You have been wanted at the barriers for some time."

"I'll keep my weather-eye open," replied the driver, getting on his box.

It needs scarcely be told, after this specimen of slang, that the coachman was a robber, one of the Schoolmaster's worthy associates. The vehicle then quitted the Rue du Temple.

Two hours afterwards, towards the closing of a winter's day, the vehicle containing the Chouette, the Schoolmaster, and Tortillard, stopped before a wooden cross, marking out the sunken and lonely road which conducted to the farm at Bouqueval, where the Goualeuse remained under the kind protection of Madame Georges.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN IDYL.

The hour of five had just struck from the church-clock of the little village of Bouqueval, the cold was intense, the sky clear, the sun, sinking slowly behind the vast leafless woods which crowned the heights of Ecouen, cast a purple hue over the horizon, and sent its faint, sloping rays across the extensive plains, white and hard with winter's frost.

In the country each season has its own distinctive features, its own peculiar charm: at times the dazzling snow changes the whole scene into immense landscapes of purest alabaster, exhibiting their spotless beauties to the reddish grey of the sky. Then may be seen in the glimmer of twilight, either ascending or descending the hill, a benighted farmer returning to his habitation; his horse, cloak, and hat, are covered with the falling snow. Bitter is the cold, biting the north wind, dark and gloomy the approaching night: but what cares he? there, amid those leafless trees, he sees the bright taper burning in the window of his cheerful home; while from the tall chimney a column of dark smoke rolls upwards through the flaky shower that descends, and speaks to the toil-worn farmer of a blazing hearth and humble meal prepared by kind affection to welcome him after the fatigues of his journey. Then the rustic gossip by the fireside, on which the fagot burns and crackles, and a peaceful, comfortable night's rest, amid the whistling of the winds,

and the barking of the various dogs at the different farms scattered around, with the answering cry from the distant watch-dog.

Daylight opens upon a scene of fairy-land. Surely the tiny elves have been celebrating some grand fête, and have left some of their adornments behind them, for on each branch hang long spiracles of crystal, glittering in the rays of a winter's sun with all the prismatic brilliancy of the diamond. The damp, rich soil of the arable-land is laid down in furrows, where hides the timid hare in her form, or the speckled partridge runs merrily. Here and there is heard the melancholy tinkling of the sheep-bell hanging from the neck of some important leader of the numerous flocks scattered over the verdant heights and turfy valleys of the neighbourhood; while, carefully wrapped in his dark grey cloak, the shepherd, seated under shelter of those knotted trunks and interlaced branches, chants his cheerful lay, while his fingers are busily employed weaving a basket of rushes.

Occasionally a more animated scene presents itself: distant echo gives out the faint sound of the hunting-horn, and the cry of hounds; suddenly a frightened deer bursts from the neighbouring forest, stands for a few seconds in terrified alarm upon the frozen plain, then darts onward, and is quickly lost amid the thickets on the opposite side. The trampling of horses, the barking of dogs, are rapidly brought nearer by the breeze; and now, in their turn, a pack of dogs with brown and tawny-spotted skins issue from the brushwood from which the frightened deer but just now came; they run eagerly over the sterile ground, the fallow fields, with noses closely pointed to the ground they pursue with loud cries the traces left by the flying deer. At their heels come the hunters in their scarlet coats, bending over the necks of their swift steeds; they encourage their dogs by their voices mingled with the notes of the horn. Swift as lightning the brilliant *cortège* passes on; the noise decreases; by degrees all is still, dogs, horses, and huntsmen, are lost in the tangled mazes of the forest, where the frightened stag had sought and found a hiding-place. Then peace and calm resumed their reign; and the profound stillness of these vast plains was interrupted only by the monotonous song of the shepherd.

These sights—these rustic views, abounded in the environs of the village of Bouqueval, which, spite of its proximity to Paris, was situated in a sort of desert, to which there was no approach except by cross-roads. Concealed during summer among the trees, like a nest amid the sheltering foliage, the farm which had become the home of the poor Goualeuse was now utterly bereft of its leafy screen, and entirely exposed to view. The course of the little river, now quite frozen over, resembled a long silver riband stretched along the ever-verdant meadows, through which a number of fine cows were leisurely wending their way to their stable. Brought home by the approach of night, flocks of pigeons were successively arriving, and perching on the peaked roof of the dove-house; while the immense walnut-trees, that during the summer afforded an umbrageous screen both to the farm-house and its numerous out-buildings, stripped of its rich foliage, exhibited only bare branches, through which could plainly be discerned the tiled roof of the one, and the thatched tops of the others, overgrown with patches of moss of mingled green and dingy brown.

A heavy cart, drawn by three strong, sturdy horses, with long, thick manes and shining coats, with blue collars ornamented with bells and

tassels of red worsted, was bringing in a load of wheat from a neighbouring rick. This ponderous machine entered the court-yard by the large gate; while immense flocks of sheep were pressing eagerly round the side entrances; both men and beasts appeared impatient to escape from the severity of the cold, and to enjoy the comfort of repose. The horses neighed joyously at the sight of their stable, the sheep bleated their satisfaction at returning to their warm folds, while the hungry labourers cast a longing look towards the kitchen-windows, from which streamed forth pleasant promise of a warm and savoury meal.

The whole of the exterior arrangements of the farm were indicative of the most scrupulous order, neatness, and exactitude. Instead of being covered with dirt and dust, scattered about, and exposed to the inclemency of the season, the carts, rollers, harrows, &c., with every agricultural implement (and some were of the last and best invention), were placed, well cleaned and painted, under a vast shed, where the carters were accustomed to arrange their cart-harness with the most symmetrical attention to order and method. Large, clean, and well laid out, the court-yard had none of those huge dung-heaps, those stagnant pools of filthy water, which deface the finest establishments of La Beauce or La Brie.

The poultry-yard, surrounded by a green trellising, received and shut in all the feathered tribe, who, after wandering in the fields all day, returned home by a small door left open till all were collected, when it was carefully closed and secured. Without dwelling too minutely upon every detail, we shall merely observe, that in all respects this farm passed most justly in the environs for a *model farm*, as much for the excellency of the method by which it was conducted, and the abundant crops it produced, as for the respectability and correct mode of life which distinguished the various labourers employed there, who were soon ranked among the most creditable and efficient workmen of the place.

The cause of all this prosperity shall be spoken of hereafter, meanwhile we will conduct the reader to the trellised gate of the poultry-yard; which, for the rustic elegance of its perches and poultry-houses, was no ways inferior to the farm itself; while through the centre flowed a small stream of clear, limpid water, the bed of which was laid down with smooth pebbles, carefully cleansed from any obstructing substance.

A sudden stir arose among the winged inhabitants of this charming spot: the fowls flew fluttering and cackling from their perches, the turkeys gabbled, the guinea-fowls screamed, and the pigeons, forsaking their elevated position on the summit of the dove-house, descended to the sandy surface of the yard, and stood cooing and caressing each other with every manifestation of joy. The arrival of Fleur-de-Marie had occasioned all these ecstatic delights.

A more charming model than the Goualeuse could not have been desired by Greuze or Watteau, had her cheeks possessed a little more *rondeur* or been visited by a brighter tinge; but, spite of their delicate paleness, the expression of her features, the *tout ensemble* of her figure, and the gracefulness of her attitude, would have rendered her worthy of exercising the crayons of even the celebrated artists we have alluded to.

The small round cap of Fleur-de-Marie displayed her fair forehead, and light, braided hair, in common with all the young girls in the environs of Paris; above this cap, but still exposing the crown and ears, she wore a

large red cotton handkerchief, folded smoothly, and pinned behind her head; while the long ends waving gracefully over her shoulders formed a costume which, for graceful effect, might be envied even by the tasteful *coiffeurs* of Italy or Switzerland. A handkerchief of snow-white linen, crossed over her bosom, was half concealed by the high and spreading front of her coarse cloth apron. A jacket of blue woollen cloth with tight sleeves displayed her slender figure, and descended half way down her thick skirt of dark-striped fustian; white cotton stockings and tied shoes, partly covered by sabots, furnished with a leather strap for the instep, completed this costume of rustic simplicity, to which the natural grace of Fleur-de-Marie lent an inexpressible charm.

Holding in one hand the two corners of her apron, with the other she distributed handfuls of grain among the winged crowd by which she was surrounded. One beautiful pigeon of a silvery whiteness, with beak and feet of a rich purple colour, more presuming or more indulged than the rest, after having flown several times around Fleur-de-Marie, at length alighted on her shoulder; the young girl, as though well used to these

familiarities, continued, wholly undisturbed, to throw out continued supplies of grain; but, half turning her head till its perfect outline alone was visible, she gently raised her head, and smilingly offered her small rosy lips to meet those of her fond, caressing friend. The last rays of the setting sun shed a pale golden light over this innocent picture.

While the Goualeuse was thus occupied with her rural cares, Madame Georges and the Abbé Laporte, curé of Bouqueval, sitting by the fireside in the neat little parlour of the farm, were conversing on the one constant theme—Fleur-de-Marie. The old curé, with a pensive, thoughtful air, his head bent downwards, and his elbows leaning on his knees, mechanically stretched his two trembling hands before the fire. Madame Georges, laying aside the needlework on which she had been occupied, kept an anxious eye on the abbé, as though eagerly waiting for some observation from him. After a moment's silence,—

"Yes," said he, "you are right, Madame Georges: it will be better for M. Rodolph to question Marie, for she is so filled with deep gratitude and devotion to him, that she will probably reveal to him what she persists in concealing from us."

"Then, since you agree with me, M. le Curé, I will write, this very evening, to the address he left with me,—the Allée des Veuves."

"Poor child!" sighed the kind old man, "she ought to have been so happy here; what secret grief can thus be preying on her mind?"

"Her unhappiness is too deeply fixed to be removed even by her earnest and passionate application to study."

"And yet she has made a most rapid and extraordinary progress since she has been under our care, has she not?"

"She has, indeed; already she can read and write with the utmost fluency, and is already sufficiently advanced in arithmetic to assist me in keeping my farm-accounts: and then the dear child is so active and industrious, and really affords me so much assistance as both surprises me and moves me to tears. You know that, spite of my repeated remonstrances, she persisted in working so hard, that I became quite alarmed lest such toil should seriously affect her health."

"I am thankful to hear from you," resumed the worthy curé, "that your Negro doctor has fully quieted your apprehensions respecting the cough your young friend suffered from: he says it is merely temporary, and gives no reason for uneasiness."

"Oh, that kind, excellent M. David! he really appeared to feel the same interest in the poor girl that we did who know her sad story. She is universally beloved and respected by all on the farm; though that is not surprising, as, thanks to the generous and elevated views of M. Rodolph, all the persons employed on it are selected for their good sense and excellent conduct, from all parts of the kingdom; but were it not so —were they of the common herd of vulgar-minded labourers, they could not help feeling the influence of Marie's angelic sweetness and timid, graceful manner, as though she were always deprecating anger or beseeching pardon for some involuntary fault. Unfortunate being! as though she alone were to blame."

After remaining for several minutes buried in reflection, the abbé resumed,—

"Did you not tell me that this deep dejection of Marie's might be dated from the time when Madame Dubreuil, who rents under the Duke de Lucenay, paid her a visit during the feast of the Holy Ghost?"

"Yes, M. le Curé, I did. And yet Madame Dubreuil and her daughter Clara (a perfect model of candour and goodness) were as much taken with our dear child as every one else who approaches her; and both of them lavished on her every mark of the most affectionate regard. You know that we pass the Sunday alternately at each other's house; but it invariably happens that, when we return from our Sunday excursion to Arnouville, where Madame Dubreuil and her daughter reside, the melancholy of my dear Marie seems augmented and her spirits more depressed than ever. I cannot comprehend why this should be, when Madame Dubreuil treats her like a second daughter, and the sweet Clara loves her with the tender affection of a sister."

"In truth, Madame Georges, it is a fearful mystery; what can occasion all this hidden sorrow, when here she need not have a single care? The

difference between her present and past life must be as great as that which exists between heaven and the abode of the damned. Surely, hers is not an ungrateful disposition?"

"She ungrateful! oh, no, M. le Curé! her sensitive and affectionate nature magnifies the slightest service rendered her, and she appears as though her gratitude could never be sufficiently evinced. There is, too, in her every thought an instinctive delicacy and fineness of feeling wholly incompatible with ingratitude, which could never be harboured in so noble a nature as that of my charge. Dear Marie, how anxious does she seem to earn the bread she eats, and how eagerly she strives to compensate the hospitality shewn her, by every exertion she can make or service she can render. And, then, except on Sunday, when I *make* it a point she should dress herself with more regard to appearance to accompany me to church, she will only wear the coarse, humble garments worn by our young peasant girls; and yet there is in her such an air of native superiority, so natural a grace, that one would not desire to see her otherwise attired, would they, M. le Curé?"

"Ah, mother's pride! Beware!" said the old priest, smiling.

At these words, tears filled the eyes of Madame Georges, she thought of her long-lost child, and of his possible destiny.

"Come, come, dear friend, cheer up! look upon our dear Marie as sent by a gracious Providence to occupy your maternal affections until the blessed moment when he shall restore you your son; and, besides, you have a sacred duty to perform towards this child of your adoption: are you not her baptismal godmother? and, believe me, when that office is worthily discharged, it almost equals that of a mother. As for M. Rodolph, he has discharged his obligation of godfather by anticipation, for, in snatching her from the abyss of crime into which her misfortunes and her helplessness had cast her, he may be said to have caused her immortal existence to begin."

"Doubtless the poor thing has never received the sacrament of our holy church: do you think, M. le Curé, she is now sufficiently acquainted with its sanctified purposes to be admitted to a participation of it?"

"I will take an opportunity of learning her sentiments on the subject as we walk back to the rectory. I shall then apprise her that the holy ceremony will take place probably in about a fortnight from hence."

"How gratefully she will receive such an information; her religious feelings are the strongest I have ever met with."

"Alas, poor thing! she has deep and heavy expiation to make for the errors of her past life."

"Nay, Monsieur l'Abbé, consider. Abandoned so young, without resource, without friends, almost without a knowledge of good or evil, plunged involuntarily into the very vortex of crime, what was there to prevent her from falling the bitter sacrifice she has been?"

"The clear, moral sense of right and wrong implanted by the Creator in every breast should have withheld her; and, besides, we have no evidence of her having even sought to escape from the horrible fate into which she

had fallen. Is there no friendly hand to be found in Paris to listen to the cries of suffering virtue? is charity so rare, so hard to obtain in that large city?"

"Let us hope not, Monsieur l'Abbé; but how to discover it is the difficulty. Ere arriving at the knowledge of one kind, commiserating Christian, think of the refusals, the rebukes, the denials to be endured. And, then, in such a case as our poor Marie's, it was no passing, temporary aid that could avail her, but the steady, continued patronage and support, the being placed in the way to earn an honest livelihood. Many tender and pitying mothers would have succoured her had they known her sad case, I doubt not, but it was first requisite to secure the happiness of knowing where to meet with them. Trust me, I too have known want and misery. But for one of those providential chances which, alas! too late, threw poor Marie in the way of M. Rodolph;—but for one of those casualties, the wretched and destitute, most commonly repulsed with rude denial on their first applications, believe pity irretrievably lost, and, pressed by hunger—fierce, clamorous hunger, often seek in vice that relief they despair to obtain from commiseration."

At this moment the Goualeuse entered the parlour.

"Where have you been, my dear child?" inquired Madame Georges, anxiously.

"Visiting the fruit-house, madame, after having shut up the hen-houses and gates of the poultry-yard. All the fruit has kept excellently—all but those I ran away with and ate."

"Now, Marie, why take all this fatigue upon yourself? You should have left all this tiring work to Claudine; I fear you have quite tired yourself."

"No, no! dear Madame Georges; I wouldn't let Claudine help me for the world. I take so much delight in my fruit-house—the smell of the beautiful ripe fruit is so delicious."

"M. le Curé," said Madame Georges, "you must go some day and see Marie's fruit-house. You can scarcely imagine the taste with which she has arranged it; each different variety of fruit is separated by rows of grapes, and the grapes are again divided off by strips of moss."

"Oh, yes, M. le Curé; pray do come and see it," said the Goualeuse, innocently; "I am sure you would be pleased with it. You would be surprised what a pretty contrast the moss makes to the bright rosy apples or the rich golden pears. There are some such lovely waxen apples, quite a pure red and white; and really, as they lie surrounded by the soft green moss, I cannot help thinking of the heads of little cherubims just peeping out from the glorious clouds of heaven," added the delighted Goualeuse, speaking with all the enthusiasm of an artist of the work of her creation.

The Curé looked at Madame Georges, then smilingly replied to Fleur-de-Marie,—

"I have already admired the dairy over which you preside, my child, and can venture to declare it perfect in its way; the most particular dairy-woman might envy you the perfection to which you have brought it. Ere long, I promise myself the pleasure of visiting your fruit-house, and passing a similar compliment on your skill in arrangement. You shall then introduce me to those charming rosy apples and delicious golden pears, as well as to the little cherubim pippins so prettily peeping from their mossy beds. But see! the sun has already set; you will scarcely have sufficient time to conduct me back to the rectory-house and return before dark. Come, my child, fetch your cloak, and let us be gone;—or, now I think of it, do you remain at home this cold bitter night, and let one of the farm-servants go home with me."

"Oh! M. le Curé," replied the kind Madame Georges, "Marie will be quite wretched if she is not allowed to accompany you; she so much enjoys the happiness of escorting you home every evening."

"Indeed, Monsieur le Curé," added the Goualeuse, timidly raising her large blue eyes to the priest's countenance, "I shall fear you are displeased with me if you do not permit me to accompany you as usual."

"Well then, my dear child, wrap yourself up very warm, and let us go."

Fleur-de-Marie hastily threw over her shoulders a sort of cloak of coarse white cloth, edged with black velvet, and with a large hood, to be drawn at pleasure over the head. Thus equipped, she eagerly offered her arm to her venerable friend.

"Happily," said he, in taking it, "the distance is but trifling, and the road both good and safe to pass at all hours."

"As it is somewhat later to-night than usual," said Madame Georges, "will you have one of the farm-people to return with you, Marie?"

"Do you take me for a coward?" said Marie, playfully. "I am

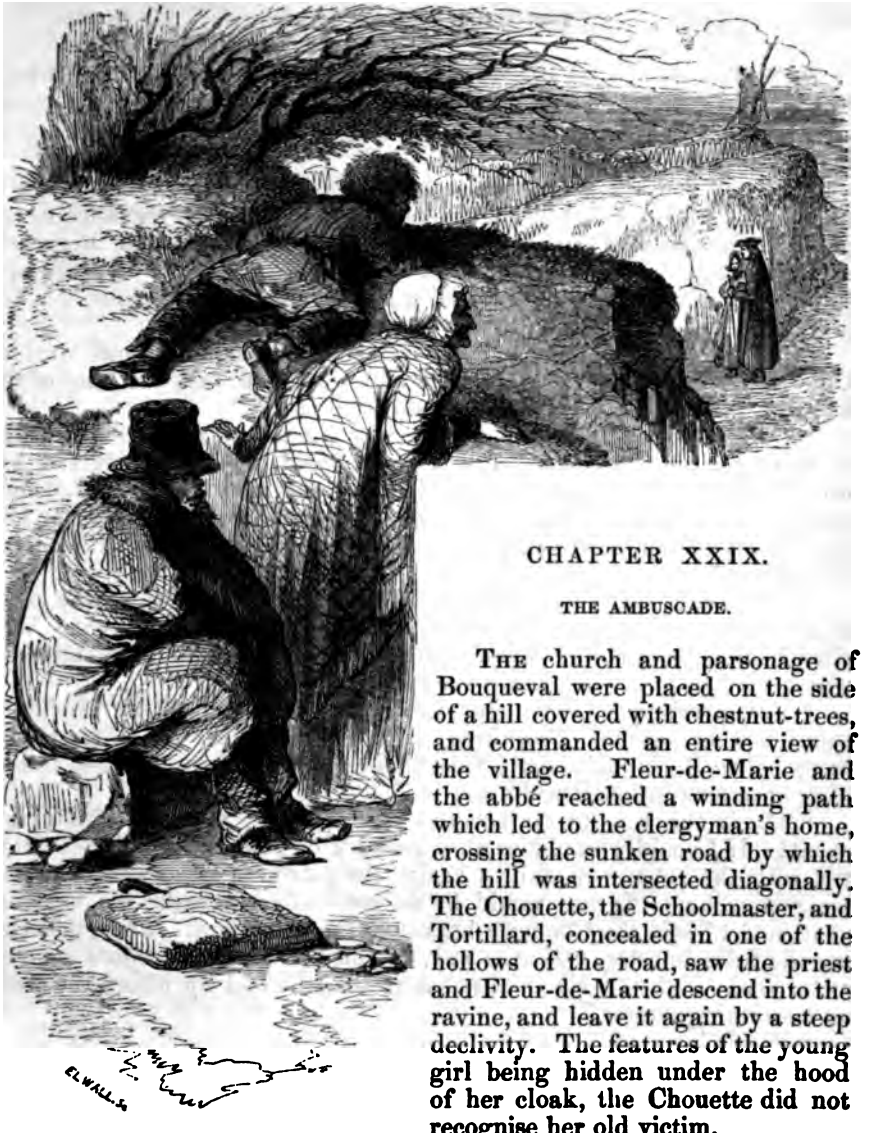
very much obliged to you for your good opinion, madame. No, pray do not let any one be called away on my account. It is not a quarter of an hour's walk from here to the rectory. I shall be back long before dark."

"Well, as you like. I merely thought it would be company for you; for as to fearing, thank Heaven, there is no cause. Loose vagabond people, likely to interrupt your progress, are wholly unknown here."

"And, were I not equally sure of the absence of all danger, I would not accept this dear child's arm," added the curé, "useful as, I confess, I find it."

And, leaning on Fleur-de-Marie, who regulated her light step to suit the slow and laboured pace of the old man, the two friends quitted the farm.

A few minutes' walk brought the Goualeuse and the priest close to the hollow road in which the Schoolmaster, the Chouette, and Tortillard, were lying in ambush.



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE AMBUSCADE.

The church and parsonage of Bouqueval were placed on the side of a hill covered with chestnut-trees, and commanded an entire view of the village. Fleur-de-Marie and the abbé reached a winding path which led to the clergyman's home, crossing the sunken road by which the hill was intersected diagonally. The Chouette, the Schoolmaster, and Tortillard, concealed in one of the hollows of the road, saw the priest and Fleur-de-Marie descend into the ravine, and leave it again by a steep declivity. The features of the young girl being hidden under the hood of her cloak, the Chouette did not recognise her old victim.

"Silence, my old boy," said the old harridan to the Schoolmaster; "the young *mot* and the *black slug* are just crossing the path. I know her by the description which the tall man in black gave us: a country appearance, neither tall nor short; a petticoat shot with brown, and a woollen mantle with a black border. She walks every day with a *devil-dodger* to his *crib*, and returns alone. When she comes back, which she will do presently by the end of the road, we must spring upon her and carry her off to the coach."

"If she cries for help," replied the Schoolmaster, "they will hear her at the farm, if, as you say, the outbuildings are visible from here; for you —you can see," he added, in a sullen tone.

"Oh, yes, we can see the buildings from here quite plainly," said Tortillard. "It is only a minute ago that I climbed to the top of the bank, and, laying down on my belly, I could hear a carter who was talking to his horses in the yard there."

"I'll tell you, then, what we must do," said the Schoolmaster, after a moment's silence. "Let Tortillard have the watch at the entrance to the path. When he sees the young girl returning, let him go and meet her, saying that he is the son of a poor old woman who has hurt herself by falling down the hollow road, and beg the girl to come to her assistance."

"I'm up to you, *fourline;* the poor old woman is your darling Chouette. You're *wide awake!* My man, you are always the king of the *downy ones* (*têtards*). What must I do afterwards?"

"Conceal yourself in the hollow way on the side where Barbillon is waiting with the coach. I will be at hand. When Tortillard has brought the wench to you in the middle of the ravine, leave off whimpering and spring upon her, put one *mauley* round her *squeeze*, and the other into her *patter-box*, and *grab* her *red rag* to prevent her from squeaking."

"I know, I know, *fourline;* as we did with the woman at the canal of St. Martin, when we gave her cold water for supper (drowned her), after having *prigged* her *negress* (the parcel wrapped in black oil-skin) which she had under her arm—the same *dodge*, isn't it?"

"Yes, precisely. But mind, grab the girl tight whilst Tortillard comes and fetches me. We three will then bundle her up in my cloak, carry her to Barbillon's coach, from thence to the plain of Saint Denis, where the man in black will await us."

"That's the way to do business, my *fourline;* you are without an equal! If I could, I would let off a firework on your head, and illuminate you with the colours of Saint Charlot, the patron of *scragsmen*. Do you see, you urchin? If you would be an *out-and-outer*, make my husband your model," said the Chouette boastingly, to Tortillard. Then, addressing the Schoolmaster, "By the way, do you know that Barbillon is in an awful *funk* (fright)? He thinks that he shall be had up before the *beaks* on a swinging matter."

"Why?"

"The other day, returning from Mother Martial's, the widow of the man who was scragged, and who keeps the boozing-ken in the Ile du Ravageur, Barbillon, the Gros-Boiteux, and the Skeleton, had a row with the husband of the milkwoman who comes every morning from the country in a little cart drawn by a donkey, to sell her milk in the Cité, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, close to the ogress's of the 'White Rabbit,' and they *walked into him with their slashers* (killed him with their knives)."

The son of Bras Rouge, who did not understand slang, listened to the Chouette with a sort of disappointed curiosity.

"You would like to know, little man, what we are saying, wouldn't you?"

"Yes. You were talking of Mother Martial, who is at the Ile du

Ravageur, near Asnières. I know her very well, and her daughter Calebasse, and François and Amandine, who are about as old as I am, and who are made to bear every body's snubs and thumps in the house. But when you talked of '*walking into*' (*buter*) any one, that's slang, I know."

"It is; and, if you're a very good chap, I'll teach you to *patter flash*. You're just the age when it may be very useful to you. Would you like to learn, my precious lambkin?"

"I rayther think I should, too, and no mistake; and I would rather live with you than with my old cheat of a mountebank, pounding his drugs. If I knew where he hides his *rat-poison for men*, I'd put some in his soup, and then that would settle the quarrel between us."

The Chouette laughed heartily, and said to Tortillard, drawing him towards her,—

"Come, chick, and kiss his mammy. What a droll boy it is—a darling! But, my mannikin, how didst know that he had rat-poison for men?"

"Why, 'cause I heard him say so one day when I was hid in the cupboard in the room where he keeps his bottles, his brass machines, and where he mixes his stuffs together."

"What did you hear him say?" asked the Chouette.

"I heard him say to a gentleman that he gave a powder to, in a paper, 'When you are tired of life, take this in three doses, and you will sleep without sickness or sorrow.'"

"Who was the gentleman?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, a very handsome gentleman with black moustachios, and a face as pretty as a girl's. He came another time; and then, when he left, I followed him, by M. Bradamanti's order, to find out where he *perched*. The fine gentleman went into the Rue de Chaillot, and entered a very grand house. My master said to me, 'No matter where this gentleman goes, follow and wait for him at the door. If he comes out again, still keep your eye on him, until he does not come from out of the place where he enters, and that will prove that he lives there. Then Tortillard, my boy, twist (*tortille*) yourself about to find out his name, or I will twist your ears in a way that will astonish you.'"

"Well?"

"Well, I did *twist* myself about, and found out his name."

"How did you manage it?" inquired the Schoolmaster.

"Why, so. I'm not a fool; so I went to the porter at the house in the Rue de Chaillot, where this gentleman had gone in and not come out again. The porter had his hair finely powdered, with a fine brown coat with a yellow collar trimmed with silver. So I says to him, 'Good gentleman, I have come to ask for a hundred sous which the gentleman of the house has promised me for having found his dog and brought it back to him—a little black dog called *Trumpet;* and the gentleman with dark features, with black moustachios, a white riding-coat, and light blue pantaloons, told me he lived at No. 11 Rue de Chaillot, and that his name was Dupont.' 'The gentleman you're talking of is my master, and his name is the Viscount de Saint Remy, and we have no dog here but your-

self, you young scamp; so *cut your stick*, or I'll make you remember coming here, and trying to do me out of a hundred sous,' says the porter

to me; and he gave me a kick as he said it. But I didn't mind that," added Tortillard most philosophically; "for I found out the name of the handsome young gentleman with black moustachios, who came to my master's to buy the 'rat-poison for men' who are tired of living. He is called the Viscount de Saint-Remy—my—my—Saint-Remy," added the son of Bras Rouge, humming the last words, as was his usual habit.

"Clever little darling—I could eat him up alive!" said the Chouette, embracing Tortillard. "Never was such a knowing fellow! He deserves that I should be his mother, the dear rascal does."

And the hag embraced Tortillard with an absurd affectation. The son of Bras Rouge, touched by this proof of affection, and desirous of shewing his gratitude, eagerly answered,—

"Only you tell me what to do, and you shall see how I'll do it."

"Will you, though? Well, then, you shan't repent doing so."

"Oh, I should like always to stay with you!"

"If you behave well, we may see about that. You shan't leave us if you are a good boy."

"Yes," said the Schoolmaster, "you shall lead me about like a poor blind man, and say you are my son. We will get into houses in this way, and then—ten thousand slaughters!" added the assassin with enthusiasm; "the Chouette will assist us in making lucky hits. I will then teach that devil of a Rodolph, who blinded me, that I am not yet quite done for. He took away my eyesight, but he could not, did not, remove my bent for mischief. I would be the head, Tortillard the eyes, and you the hand—eh, Chouette? You will help me in this, won't you?"

"Am I not with you to gallows and rope, *fourline?* Didn't I, when I left the hospital, and learnt that you had sent the *yokel* from St. Mandé to ask for me at the ogress's—didn't I run to you at the village directly, telling those chawbacons of labourers that I was your *rib?*"

These words of the "one-eyed's" reminded the Schoolmaster of an unpleasant affair, and, altering his tone and language with the Chouette, he said, in a surly tone,—

"Yes, I was getting tired of being all by myself with these honest people. After a month I could not stand it any longer; I was frightened. So then I thought of trying to find you out; and a nice thing I did for myself," he added, in a tone of increasing anger; "for the day after you arrived I was robbed of the rest of the money which that devil in the Allée des Veuves had given me. Yes, some one stole my belt full of gold whilst I was asleep. It was only you who could have done it; and so now I am at your mercy. Whenever I think of it, I can hardly restrain myself from killing you on the spot—you cursed old robber, you!" and he stepped towards the old woman.

"Look out for yourself, if you try to do any harm to the Chouette!" cried Tortillard.

"I will smash you both—you and she—base vipers as you are!" cried the ruffian, enraged; and, hearing the boy mumbling near him, he aimed at him so violent a blow with his fist, as must have killed him if it had struck him. Tortillard, as much to revenge himself as the Chouette, picked up a stone, took aim, and struck the Schoolmaster on the forehead. The blow was not dangerous, but very painful. The brigand grew furious with passion, raging like a wounded bull, and, rushing forward swiftly and at random, stumbled.

"What, break your own back?" shouted the Chouette, laughing till she cried.

Despite the bloody ties which bound her to this monster, she saw how entirely, and with a sort of savage delight, this man, formerly so dreaded, and so proud of his giant strength, was reduced to impotence. The old wretch, by these feelings, justified that cold-blooded idea of La Rochefoucauld's, that "there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends which does not displease us." The disgusting brat, with his tawny cheeks and weasel face, enjoyed and participated in the mirth of the one-eyed hag. The Schoolmaster tripped again, and the urchin exclaimed,—

"Open your peepers, old fellow; look about you. You are going the wrong way. What capers you are cutting! Can't you see your way? Why don't you wipe your eye-glasses?"

Unable to seize on the boy, the athletic murderer stopped, struck his foot violently on the ground, put his enormous and hairy fists to his eyes, and then uttered a sound which resembled the hoarse scream of a muzzled tiger.

"Got a bad cough, I'm afraid, old chap!" said Bras Rouge's brat. "You're hoarse, I'm afraid? I have some capital liquorice which a gendarme gave me. P'raps you'd like to try it?" and, taking up a handful of sand, he threw it in the face of the ruffian.

Struck full in his countenance by this shower of gravel, the Schoolmaster suffered still more severely by this last attack than by the blow from the stone. Become pale, in spite of his livid and cicatrised features, he extended his two arms suddenly in the form of a cross, in a moment of inexpressible agony and despair, and, raising his frightful face to heaven, he cried, in a voice of deep suffering,—

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*"

This involuntary appeal to Divine mercy by a man stained by every crime, a bandit in whose presence but very recently the most resolute of his fellows trembled, appeared like an interposition of Providence.

"Ha! ha! ha!" said the Chouette, in a mocking tone; "look at the thief making the crucifix! You mistake your road, my man. It is the 'old one' you should call to your help."

"A knife! Oh, for a knife to kill myself! A knife! since all the world abandons me!" shrieked the wretch, gnawing his fists for very agony and rage.

"A knife!—there's one in your pocket, cut-throat, and with an edge, too. The little old man in the Rue du Roule, you know, one moonlight night, and the cattle-dealer in the Poissy road, could tell the *moles* all about it. But if you want it, it's here."

The Schoolmaster, when thus instructed, changed the conversation, and replied, in a surly and threatening tone,—

"The Chourineur was true; he did not rob, but had pity on me."

"Why did you say that I had *prigged* your *blunt?*" inquired the Chouette, hardly able to restrain her laughter.

"It was only you who came into my room," said the miscreant. "I was robbed on the night of your arrival, and who else could I suspect? Those country people could not have done such a thing."

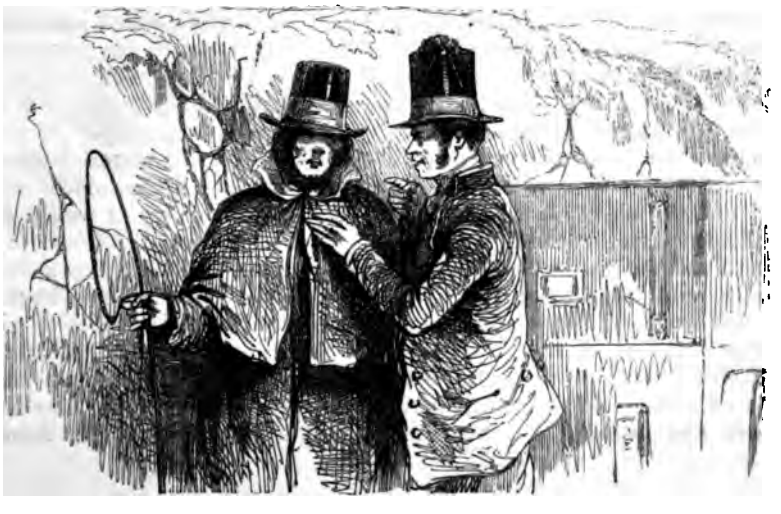
"Why should not country people steal as well as other folks? Is it because they drink milk and gather grass for their rabbits?"

"I don't know. I only know I'm robbed."

"And is that the fault of your own Chouette? What! suspect me? Do you think if I had got your belt that I should stay any longer with you. What a fool you are! Why, if I had chosen to *pouch* your *blunt*, I could, of course; but, as true as I'm Chouette, you would have seen me again when the 'pewter' was spent, for I like you as well now with your eyes white, as I did—you rogue, you! Come, be decent, and leave off grinding your 'snags' in that way, or you'll break 'em."

"It's just as if he was a-cracking nuts," said Tortillard.

"Ha! ha! ha! what a droll baby it is! But quiet, now quiet, my man of men; let him laugh, it is but an infant. You must own you have been unfair; for when the tall man in mourning, who looks like a mute at a funeral, said to me, 'A thousand francs are yours if you carry off this young girl from the farm at Bouqueval, and bring her to the spot in the Plain of St. Denis that I shall tell you;' say, cut-throat, didn't I directly tell you of the affair and agree to share with you, instead of choosing some *pal* with his eyesight clear? Why, it's like making you a handsome present for doing nothing; for unless to bundle up the girl and carry her, with Tortillard's assistance, you would be of no more use to me than the fifth wheel to an omnibus. But never mind; for, although I could have robbed you if I would, I like, on the contrary, to do you service. I should wish you to owe every thing to your darling Chouette—that's my way, that is. We must give two hundred *bob* to Barbillon for driving



the coach, and coming once before with the servant of the tall man in mourning, to look about the place and determine where we should hide ourselves whilst we waited for the young miss; and then we shall have eight hundred *bob* between us. What do you say to that, old boy? What! still angry with your old woman?"

"How do I know that you will give me a 'mag' when once the thing's done. Why!—I"—said the ruffian, in a tone of gloomy distrust.

"Why, if I like, I need not give you a dump, that's true enough; for you are on my gridiron, my lad, as I once had the Goualeuse; and so I will broil you to my own taste, till the 'old one' gets the cooking of my darling—ha! ha! ha! What, still sulky with your Chouette?" added the horrible woman, patting the shoulder of the ruffian, who stood mute and motionless.

"You are right," said he, with a sigh of concentrated rage; "it is my fate—mine—mine! At the mercy of a woman and child whom but lately I could have killed with a blow. Oh, if I were not afraid of dying!" said he, falling back against the bank.

"What! a coward!—you—you a coward!" said the Chouette, contemptuously. "Why, you'll be talking next of your conscience! What a precious farce! Well, if you haven't more pluck than that, I'll *cut* and leave you."

"And that I cannot have my revenge of the man who in thus making a martyr of me has reduced me to the wretched situation in which I am!" screamed the Schoolmaster, in a renewal of fury. "I am afraid of death—yes, I own it, I am afraid. But if I were told, 'This man Rodolph is between your arms—your two arms—and now you shall both be flung into a pit,' I would say, 'Throw us then at once.' Yes, for then I should be safe not to relax my clutch, till we both reached the bottom together. I would fix my teeth in his face—his throat—his heart. I would tear him to pieces with my teeth—yes, my teeth; for I should be jealous of a knife!"

"Bravo, *fourline!* now you are my own dear love again. Calm yourself. We will find him again, that wretch of a Rodolph, and the Chourineur too. Come, pluck up, old man; we will yet work our will on them both. I say it, on both!"

"Well, then, you will not forsake me?" cried the brigand to the Chouette in a subdued tone, mingled, however, with distrust. "If you do leave me, what will become of me?"

"That's true. I say, *fourline*, what a joke if Tortillard and I were to *mizzle* with the *drag*, and leave you where you are—in the middle of the fields; and the night air begins to nip very sharp. I say, it would be a joke, old cutpurse, wouldn't it?"

At this threat the Schoolmaster shuddered, and, coming towards the Chouette, said tremulously, "No, no, you wouldn't do that, Chouette; nor you, Tortillard. It would be too bad, wouldn't it?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Too bad, says he, the gentle dear! And the little old man in the Rue du Roule; and the cattle-dealer and the woman in St. Martin's Canal; and the gentleman in the Allée des Veuves; they found you nice and amiable, I don't think—didn't they—with your *larding-*

pin? Why then, in your turn, shouldn't you be left to such tender mercy as you have shewed?"

"I'm in your power; don't abuse it," said the Schoolmaster. "Come, come, I confess I was wrong to suspect you. I was wrong to try and thump Tortillard; and, you see, I beg pardon; and of you too, Tortillard. Yes, I ask pardon of both."

"I will have you ask pardon on your knees for having tried to beat the Chouette," said Tortillard.

"You rum little beggar, how funny you are!" said the Chouette, laughing loudly; "but I should like to see what a 'guy' you will make of yourself. So on your knees, as if you were *pattering* love to your old darling. Come, do it directly, or we will leave you; and I tell you that in half an hour it will be quite dark, though you don't look as if you thought so, old 'No-Eyes.'"

"Night or day, what's that to him?" said Tortillard, saucily. "The gentleman always has his shutters closed."

"Then here, on my knees, I humbly ask your pardon, Chouette; and yours also, Tortillard! Will not that content you?" said the robber, kneeling in the middle of the highway. "And now will you leave me?"

This strange group, enclosed by the embankment of the ravine, and lighted by the red glimmer of the twilight, was hideous to behold. In the middle of the road the Schoolmaster, on his knees, extended his large and coarse hands towards the one-eyed hag; his thick and matted hair, which his fright had dishevelled, left exposed his motionless, rigid, glassy, dead eyeballs—the very glance of a corpse. Stooping deprecatingly his broad-spread shoulders, this Hercules kneels abjectly, and trembles at the feet of an old woman and a child!

The old hag herself, wrapped in a red-checked shawl, her head covered with an old cap of black lace, which allowed some locks of her grizzled hair to escape, looked down with an air of haughty contempt and domineering pride on the Schoolmaster. The bony, scorched, shrivelled, and livid countenance of the parrot-nosed old harridan expressed a savage and insulting joy; her small but fierce eye glistened like a burning coal; a sinister expression curled her lips, shaded with long straight hairs, and revealed three or four large, yellow, and decayed fangs.

Tortillard, clothed in a blouse with a leathern belt, standing on one leg, leaned on the Chouette's arm to keep himself upright. The bad expression and cunning look of this deformed imp, with a complexion as sallow as his hair, betokened at this moment his disposition—half fiend, half monkey. The shadow cast from the declivity of the ravine increased the horrid *tout ensemble* of the scene, which the increasing darkness half hid.

"Promise me—oh, promise me—at least, not to forsake me!" repeated the Schoolmaster, frightened by the silence of the Chouette and Tortillard, who were enjoying his dismay. "Are you not here?" added the murderer, leaning forwards to listen, and advancing his arms mechanically.

"Yes, my man, we are here; don't be frightened. Forsake you! leave my love! the man of my heart! no, I'd sooner be *scragged!* Once for all, I will tell you why I will not forsake you. Listen, and profit. I have always liked to have some one in my grip—beast or Christian. Before I had Pegriotte (oh! that the 'old one' would return her to my clutch! for I have still my idea of scaling off her beauty with my bottle of vitriol)—before Pegriotte's turn, I had a brat who froze to death under my care. For that little job, I got six years in the *Stone Jug*. Then I used to have little birds, which I used to tame, and then pluck 'em alive. Ha! ha! but that was troublesome work, for they did not last long. When I left the *Jug*, the Goualeuse came to hand; but the little brat ran away before I had had half my fun out of her carcass. Well, then I had a dog, who had his little troubles as well as she had; and I cut off one of his hind feet and one of his fore feet; and you never saw such a rum beggar as I made of him: I almost burst my sides with laughing at him!"

"I must serve a dog I know of, who bit me one day, in the same way," said the promising Master Tortillard.

"When I fell in again with you, my darling," continued the Chouette, "I was trying what I could do that was miserable with a cat. Well, now, at this moment, you, old boy, shall be my cat, my dog, my bird, my Pegriotte; you shall be any thing to worry (*bête de souffrance*). Do you understand, my love? Instead of having a bird or a child to make miserable, I shall have, as it were, a wolf or a tiger. I think that's rather a bright idea; isn't it?"

"Hag! devil!" cried the Schoolmaster, rising in a desperate rage.

"What, my pet angry with his darling old deary! Well, if it must be so, it must. Have your own way; you have a right to it. Good night, blind sheep!"

"The field-gate is wide open, so walk alone, Mister No-eyes; and, if

you toddle straight, you'll reach the right road somehow," said Tortillard, laughing heartily.

"Oh, that I could die! die! die!" said the Schoolmaster, writhing and twisting his arms about in agony.

At this moment, Tortillard, stooping to the ground, exclaimed, in a low voice,—

"I hear footsteps in the path; let us hide; it is not the young miss, for they come the same way as she did."

On the instant, a stout peasant girl in the prime of youth, followed by a large shepherd's dog, carrying on her head an open basket, appeared, and followed the same path which the priest and the Goualeuse had taken. We will rejoin the two latter, leaving the three accomplices concealed in the hollow of the path.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RECTORY-HOUSE.

The last rays of the sun were gradually disappearing behind the vast pile of the Château d'Ecouen and the woods which surrounded it. On all sides, until the sight lost them in the distance, were vast tracts of land lying in brown furrows hardened by the frost—an extensive desert, of which the hamlet of Bouqueval appeared to be the oasis. The sky, which was serenely glorious, was tinted by the sunset, and glowed with long lines of empurpled light, the certain token of wind and cold. These tints, which were at first of a deep red, became violet; then a bluish black, as the twilight grew more and more dark on the atmosphere. The crescent of the moon was as delicately and clearly defined as a silver ring, and began to shine beautifully in the midst of the blue and dimmed sky, where many stars already had appeared. The silence was profound—the hour most solemn. The curate stopped for a moment on the summit of the acclivity to enjoy the calm of this delicious evening. After some minutes' reflection, he extended his trembling hand towards the depths of the horizon, half veiled by the shadows of the evening, and said to Fleur-de-Marie, who was walking pensively beside him,—

"Look, my child, at the vastness and extent to which we have no visible limit: we hear not the slightest sound. Say, does not this silence give us an idea of infinity and of eternity? I say this to you, Marie,

because you are peculiarly sensitive of the beauties of creation. I have often been struck at the admiration, alike poetical and religious, with which they inspire you—you, a poor prisoner so long deprived of them. Are you not, as I am, struck with the solemn tranquillity of the hour?"

The Goualeuse made no reply. The curé, regarding her with astonishment, found she was weeping.

"What ails you, my child?"

"My father, I am unhappy!"

"Unhappy!—you?—still unhappy!"

"I know it is ingratitude to complain of my lot after all that has been and is done for me; and yet——"

"And yet?"

"Father, I pray of you forgive my sorrows; their expression may offend my benefactors."

"Listen, Marie. We have often asked you the cause of these sorrows with which you are depressed, and which excite in your second mother the most serious uneasiness. You have avoided all reply, and we have respected your secret whilst we have been afflicted at not being able to solace your sorrows."

"Alas! good father, I dare not tell you what is passing in my mind. I have been moved, as you have been, at the sight of this calm and saddening evening. My heart is sorely afflicted, and I have wept."

"But what ails you, Marie? You know how we love you! Come, tell me all. You should; for I must tell you that the time is very close at hand when Madame Georges and M. Rodolph will present you at the baptismal font, and take upon themselves the engagement before God to protect you all the days of your life."

"M. Rodolph!—he who has saved me?" cried Fleur-de-Marie, clasping her hands; "he will deign to give me this new proof of affection! Oh, indeed, my father, I can no longer conceal from you anything, lest I should, indeed, deserve to be called and thought an ingrate."

"An ingrate! How?"

"That you may understand me, I must begin and tell you of my first day at the farm."

"Then let us talk as we walk on."

"You will be indulgent to me, my father? What I shall say may perhaps be wrong."

"The Lord has shewn his mercy unto you. Be of good heart."

"When," said Fleur-de-Marie, after a moment's reflection, "I knew that, on arriving here, I should not again leave the farm and Madame Georges, I believed it was all a dream. At first I felt giddy with my happiness, and thought every moment of M. Rodolph. Very often when I was alone, and in spite of myself, I raised my eyes to heaven, as if to seek him there and thank him. Afterwards (and I was wrong, father), I thought more of him than God, attributing to him what God alone could do. I was happy—as happy as a creature who has suddenly and entirely escaped from a great danger. You and Madame Georges were so kind to me, that I thought I deserved pity rather than blame."

The curé looked at the Goualeuse with an air of surprise. She continued,—

"Gradually I became used to my sweet course of life. I no longer

felt fear when I awoke, of finding myself at the ogress's. I seemed to sleep in full security, and all my delight was to assist Madame Georges in her work, and to apply myself to the lesson you gave me, my father, as well as to profit by your advice and exhortation. Except some moments of shame, when I reflected on the past, I thought myself equal to all the world, because all the world was so kind to me. When, one day——"

Here sobs cut short poor Fleur-de-Marie's narration.

"Come, come, my poor child, calm yourself. Courage, courage!"

The Goualeuse wiped her eyes, and resumed:

"You recollect, father, during the fêtes of the Toussaints, that Madame Dubreuil, who superintends the Duke de Lucenay's farm at Arnouville, came, with her daughter, to pass some time with us?"

"I do; and I was delighted to see you form an acquaintance with Clara Dubreuil, who is a very excellent girl."

"She is an angel—an angel, father. When I knew that she was coming to stay for some days at the farm, my delight was so great that I could think of nothing else but the moment when she would arrive. At length she came. I was in my room, which she was to share with me; and, whilst I was putting it into nice order, I was sent for. I went into the saloon, my heart beating excessively, when Madame Georges, presenting me to the pretty young lady, whose looks were so kind and good, said, 'Marie, here is a friend for you.' 'I hope,' added Madame

Dubreuil, 'that you and my daughter will soon be like two sisters;' and hardly had her mother uttered these words, than Mademoiselle Clara came and embraced me. Then, father," continued Fleur-de-Marie, weeping, "I do not know what came over me; but, when I felt the fresh and fair face of Clara pressed against my cheek of shame, that cheek became scorching with guilt—remorse. I remembered who and what I was;—I—I—to receive the caresses of a good and virtuous girl!"

"Why, my child?"

"Ah, my father," cried Fleur-de-Marie, interrupting the curé with painful emotion, "when M. Rodolph took me away from the *Cité*, I began vaguely to be conscious of the depth of my degradation. But do you think that education, advice, the examples I receive from Madame Georges and yourself, have not, whilst they have enlightened my mind, made me, alas! to comprehend but too clearly that I have been more culpable than unfortunate? Before Clara's arrival, when these thoughts grew upon me, I drove them away by seeking to please Madame Georges and you, father. If I blushed for the past, it was only in my own presence. But the sight of this young lady of my own age, so charming, so virtuous, has conjured up the recollection of the distance that exists between us; and, for the first time, I have felt that there are wrongs which nothing can efface. From that time the thought has haunted me perpetually, and, in spite of myself, I recur to it. From that day I have not had one moment's repose." The Goualeuse again wiped her eyes, that swam in tears.

After having looked at her for some moments with a gaze of the tenderest pity, the curé replied,—

"Reflect, my child, that if Madame Georges desired to see you the friend of Mademoiselle Dubreuil, it was that she felt you were worthy of such a confidence from your good conduct. Your reproaches, addressed to yourself, seem almost to impugn your second mother."

"I feel that, father, and was wrong, no doubt; but I could not subdue my shame and my fear. When Clara was once settled at the farm, I was as sad as I had before thought I should be happy, when I reflected on the pleasure of having a companion of my own age. She, on the contrary, was all joy and lightness. She had a bed in my apartment; and the first evening before she went to bed she kissed me, saying, that she loved me already, and felt every kind sentiment towards me. She made me to call her Clara, and she would call me Marie. Then she said her prayers, telling me, that she would join my name with hers in her prayers, if I would also unite her name with mine. I did not dare to refuse; and, after talking for some time, she went to sleep. I had not got into my bed, and, approaching her bedside, I contemplated her angel face with tears in my eyes; and then, reflecting that she was sleeping in the same chamber with me—with one who had been at the ogress's, mixed up with robbers and murderers, I trembled as if I had committed some crime, and a thousand nameless fears beset me. I thought that God would one day punish me. I went to sleep, and had horrid dreams. I saw again those frightful objects I had nearly forgotten—the Chourineur, the Schoolmaster, the Chouette—that horrible one-eyed woman who had tortured my earliest infancy. Oh, what a night! *Mon Dieu!*—what a

night! What dreams!" said the Goualeuse, shuddering at their very recollection.

"Poor Marie!" said the curé with emotion. "Why did you not earlier tell me all this? I should have found comfort for you. But go on."

"I slept so late, that Mademoiselle Clara awoke me by kissing me. To overcome what she called my coldness, and shew her regard, she told me a secret—she was going to be married when she was eighteen to the son of a farmer at Goussainville, whom she loved very dearly, and the union had long been agreed upon by the two families. Then she added a few words of her past life, so simple, calm, and happy! She had never

quitted her mother, and never intended to do so, for her husband was to take part in the management of the farm with M. Dubreuil. 'Now, Marie,' she said, 'you know me as well as if you were my sister. So tell me all about your early days.'"

"I thought when I heard the words that I should have died of them; I blushed and stammered; I did not know what Madame Georges had said of me, and I was fearful of telling a falsehood; I answered vaguely, that I had been an orphan, educated by a very rigid person; and that I had not been happy in my infancy; and that my happiness was dated from the moment when I had come to live with Madame Georges: then Clara, as much by interest as curiosity, asked me where I had been educated, in the city or the country, my father's name, and, above all, if I remembered any thing of my mother. All these questions embarrassed as much as they pained me, for I was obliged to reply with falsehood, and you have taught me, father, how wicked it is to lie; but Clara did not think that I was deceiving her; she attributed the hesitation of my answers to the pain which my early sorrows renewed; she believed me and pitied me with a sincerity that cut me to the soul. Oh, father, you never can know what I suffered in this conversation, and how much it cost me only to reply in language of falsehood and hypocrisy!"

"Unfortunate girl! the anger of Heaven will weigh heavily on those who, by casting you into the vile road of perdition, have compelled you to undergo all your life the sad consequences of a first fault."

"Oh, yes, they were indeed cruel, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie, bitterly, "for my shame is ineffaceable. As Clara talked to me of the happiness that awaited her—her marriage, her peaceful joys of home, I could not help comparing my lot with hers; for, in spite of the kindness showered upon me, my fate must always be miserable. You and Madame Georges, in teaching me what virtue is, have taught me the depth of that abasement into which I had fallen; nothing can take from me the brand of having been the refuse of all that is vilest in the world. Alas! if the knowledge of good and evil was to be so sad to me, why not have abandoned me to my unhappy fate?"

"Oh, Marie, Marie!"

"Father, I speak ill, do I not? Alas! I dare not confess it; but I am at times so ungrateful as to repine at the benefits heaped upon me, and to say to myself, 'If I had not been snatched from infamy, why, wretchedness, misery, blows, would soon have ended my life; and, at least, I should have remained in ignorance of that purity which I must for ever regret.'"

"Alas! Marie, that is indeed fatal! A nature ever so nobly endowed by the Creator, though plunged but for one day in the foul mire from which you have been extricated, will preserve for ever the ineffaceable stigma."

"Yes, yes, my father," cried Fleur-de-Marie, full of grief, "I must despair until I die!"

"You must despair of ever tearing out this frightful page from the book of your existence," said the priest, in a sad and serious voice; "but you must have faith in the infinite mercy of the Almighty. Here, on earth, my poor child, there are for you tears, remorse, expiation; but, one day, there—up there," and he raised his hand to the sky, now filling with stars, "there is pardon and everlasting happiness."

"Pity, pity, *mon Dieu!* I am so young, and my life may still endure so long," said the Goualeuse, in a voice rent by agony, and falling at the curé's knees almost involuntarily.

The priest was standing at the top of the hill, not far from where his "modest mansion rose;" his black cassock, his venerable countenance, shaded by long white locks, lighted by the last ray of twilight, stood out from the horizon, which was of a deep transparency—a perfect clearness: pale gold in the west, sapphire over his head. The priest again elevated towards heaven one of his tremulous hands, and gave the other to Fleur-de-Marie, who bedewed it with her tears. The hood of her grey cloak fell at this moment from her shoulders, displaying the perfect outline of her lovely profile—her charming features full of suffering, and suffused with tears.

This simple and sublime scene offered a strange contrast—a singular coincidence with the horrid one which, almost at the same moment, was passing in the ravine between the Schoolmaster and the Chouette. Concealed in the darkness of the sombre cleft, assailed by base fears, a fearful murderer, carrying on his person the punishment of his crimes, was also on his knees, but in presence of an accessory, a sneering, revengeful Fury, who tormented him mercilessly, and urged him on to fresh crimes—that accomplice, the first cause of Fleur-de-Marie's misery.

Of Fleur-de-Marie, whose days and nights were embittered by never-dying remorse; whose anguish, hardly endurable, was not conceivable; surrounded from her earliest days by degraded, cruel, infamous outcasts of society; leaving the walls of a prison for the den of the ogress—even a more horrid prison; never leaving the precincts of her gaol, or the squalid streets of the *Cité;* this unhappy young creature had hitherto lived in utter ignorance of the beautiful and the good, as strange to noble and religious sentiments as to the magnificent splendour of nature. Then all that was admirable in the creature and in the Creator was revealed in a moment to her astonished soul. At this striking spectacle her mind expanded, her intelligence unfolded itself, her noble instincts were awakened; and *because* her mind expanded, *because* her intelligence was unfolded, *because* her noble instincts were awakened, yet the very consciousness of her early degradation brings with it the feeling of horror for her past life, alike torturing and enduring—she feels as she had described, that, alas! there are stains which nothing can remove.

"Ah, unhappiness for me!" said the Goualeuse, in despair: "my whole life has long to run, it may be; were it as long, as pure as your own, father, it must henceforth be blighted by the knowledge and consciousness of the past: unhappiness for me for ever!"

"On the contrary, Marie, it is happiness for you—yes, happiness for you. Your remorse, so full of bitterness, but so purifying, testifies the religious susceptibility of your mind. How many there are who, less nobly sensitive than you, would, in your place, have soon forgotten the fact, and only revelled in the delight of the *present*. Believe me, every pang that you now endure will tell in your favour when on high. God has left you for a moment in an unrighteous path, to reserve for you the glory of repentance and the everlasting reward reserved for expiation. Has he not said himself, 'Those who fight the good fight and come to me with a smile on their lips, they are my chosen; but they who, wounded in the struggle, come to me fainting and dying, they are the chosen amongst my chosen?' Courage, then, my child! support, help, counsel,—nothing will fail you. I

am very aged, but Madame Georges and M. Rodolph have still many years before them; particularly M. Rodolph, who has taken so deep an interest in you, who watches your progress with so much anxiety."

The Goualeuse was about to reply, when she was interrupted by the peasant girl whom we have already mentioned, who, having followed in the steps of the curé and Marie, now came up to them. She was one of the peasants of the farm.

"Beg your pardon, Monsieur le Curé," she said to the priest, "but Madame Georges told me to bring this basket of fruit to the rectory, and then I could accompany Mademoiselle Marie back again, for it is getting late. So I have brought Turk with me," added the dairy-maid, patting an enormous dog of the Pyrenees, which would have mastered a bear in a struggle. "Although we never have any bad people about us here in the country, it is as well to be careful."

"You are quite right, Claudine. Here we are now at the rectory. Pray thank Madame Georges for me."

Then addressing the Goualeuse in a low tone, the curé said to her, in a grave voice,—

"I must go to-morrow to the conference of the diocese; but I shall return at five o'clock. If you like, my child, I will wait for you at the rectory. I see your state of mind, and that you require a lengthened conversation with me."

"I thank you, father," replied Fleur-de-Marie. "To-morrow I will come, since you are so good as to allow me to do so."

"Here we are at the garden-gate," said the priest. "Leave your basket there, Claudine; my housekeeper will take it. Return quickly to the farm with Marie, for it is almost night, and the cold is increasing. To-morrow, Marie, at five o'clock."

"To-morrow, father."

The abbé went into his garden. The Goualeuse and Claudine, followed by Turk, took the road to the farm.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RENCOUNTER.

THE night set in clear and cold. Following the advice of the Schoolmaster, the Chouette had gone to that part of the hollow way which was the most remote from the path, and nearest to the cross-road where Barbillon was waiting with the hackney-coach. Tortillard, who was posted as an advanced guard, watched for the return of Fleur-de-Marie, whom he was desirous of drawing into the trap by begging her to come to the assistance of a poor old woman. The son of Bras Rouge had advanced a few steps out of the ravine to try and discern Marie, when he heard the Goualeuse some way off speaking to the peasant girl who accompanied her. The plan had failed; and Tortillard quickly went down into the ravine to run and inform the Chouette.

"There is somebody with the young girl," said he, in a low and breathless tone.

"May the hangman squeeze her weasand, the little beggar!" exclaimed the Chouette in a rage.

"Who's with her?" asked the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, no doubt, the country wench who passed along the road just now, followed by a large dog. I heard a woman's voice," said Tortillard. "Hark!—do you hear? There's the noise of their sabots!" and, in the silence of the night, the wooden soles sounded clearly on the ground hardened by the frost.

"There are two of 'em. I can manage the young 'un in the grey

mantle; but what can we do with t'other? *Fourline* can't see, and Tortillard is too weak to do for the companion—devil choke her! What can be done?" asked the Chouette.

"I'm not strong; but, if you like, I'll cling to the legs of the country-woman with the dog. I'll hold on by hands and teeth, and not let her go, I can tell you. You can take away the little one in the meantime, you know, Chouette."

"If they cry or resist, they will hear them at the farm," replied the Chouette, "and come to their assistance before we can reach Barbillon's coach. It is no easy thing to carry off a woman who resists."

"And they have a large dog with them," said Tortillard.

"Bah! bah! If it was only that, I could break the brute's skull with a blow of my shoe-heel," said the Chouette.

"Here they are," replied Tortillard, who was listening still to the echo of their footsteps. "They are coming down the hollow now."

"Why don't you speak, *fourline?*" said the Chouette to the School-master. "What is best to be done, long-headed as you are, eh? Are you grown dumb?"

"There's nothing to be done to-day," replied the miscreant.

"And the thousand *bob* of the man in mourning," said the Chouette; "they are gone, then? I'd sooner——Your knife—your knife, *fourline!* I will stick the companion, that she may be no trouble to us; and, as to the young miss, Tortillard and I can make off with her."

"But the man in mourning does not desire that we should kill any one!"

"Well, then, we must put the *cold meat* down as an *extra* in his bill. He must pay, for he will be an accomplice with us."

"Here they come—down the hill," said Tortillard, softly.

"Your knife, lad!" said the Chouette, in a similar tone.

"Ah, Chouette," cried Tortillard, in alarm, and extending his hands to the hag, "that is too bad—to kill. No!—oh, no!"

"Your knife, I tell you!" repeated the Chouette, in an under-tone, without paying the least attention to Tortillard's supplication, and putting

her shoes off hastily. "I have taken off my shoes," she added, "that I may steal on them quietly from behind. It is almost dark; but I can easily make out the little one by her cloak, and I will do for the other."

"No!" said the felon; "to-day it is useless. There will be plenty of time to-morrow."

"What! you're afraid, old patterer, are you?" said the Chouette, with fierce contempt.

"Not at all," replied the Schoolmaster. "But you may fail in your blow, and spoil all."

The dog which accompanied the country-woman, scenting the persons hidden in the hollow road, stopped short, and barked furiously, refusing to come to Fleur-de-Marie, who called him frequently.

"Do you hear their dog? Here they are! Your knife!—or, if not——" cried the Chouette, with a threatening air.

"Come and take it from me, then—by force!" said the Schoolmaster.

"It's all over—it's too late," added the Chouette, after listening for a moment attentively; "they have gone by. You shall pay for that, gallows-bird!" added she, furiously, shaking her fist at her accomplice. "A thousand francs lost by your stupidity!"

"A thousand—two thousand—perhaps three thousand, gained!" replied the Schoolmaster, in a tone of authority. "Listen, Chouette. Do you go back to Barbillon, and let him drive you to the place where you were to meet the man in mourning. Tell him that it was impossible to do any thing to-day, but that to-morrow she shall be carried off. The young girl goes every evening to walk home with the priest, and it was only a chance which to-day led her to meet with any one. To-morrow we shall have a more secure opportunity. So to-morrow do you return and be with Barbillon at the cross-road in his coach at the same hour."

"But thou—thou?"

"Tortillard shall lead me to the farm where the young girl lives. I will cook up some tale—say we have lost our road, and ask leave to pass the night at the farm in a corner of the stable. No one could refuse us that. Tortillard will examine all the doors, windows, and ins-and-outs of the house. There is always money to be looked for amongst these farming people. You say the farm is situated in a lone spot; and, when once we know all the ways and outlets, we need only return with some safe friends, and the thing is done as easy——"

"Always *downy!* What a head-piece!" said the Chouette, softening. "Go on, *fourline!*"

"To-morrow morning, instead of leaving the farm, I will complain of a pain which prevents me from walking. If they will not believe me, I'll shew them the wound which I have always had since I smashed the *loop of my darbies*, and which is always painful to me. I'll say it is a burn I had from a red-hot bar when I was a workman, and they'll believe me. I'll remain at the farm part of the day, whilst Tortillard looks about him. When the evening comes on, and the little wench goes out as usual with the priest, I'll say I'm better, and fit to go away. Tortillard and I will follow the young wench at a distance, and await your coming to us here. As she will know us already, she will have no mistrust when she sees us. We will speak to her, Tortillard and I; and, when once within reach of my arms, I will answer for the rest. She's caught safe enough, and the

thousand francs are ours. That is not all. In two or three days we can *give the office* of the farm to Barbillon and some others, and share with them if they get any *swag*, as it will be me who put them on the *lay*."

"Well done, No-Eyes! No one can come up to you," said the Chouette, embracing the Schoolmaster. "Your plan is capital! Tell you what, *fourline*, when you are done up and old, you must turn consulting-*prig*; you will earn as much money as a *big-wig*. Come, kiss your old woman, and be off as quick as you may, for these joskins go to sleep with their poultry. I shall go to Barbillon; and to-morrow, at four o'clock, we will be at the cross-road with the 'trap,' unless he is nabbed for having assisted Gros-Boiteux and the Skeleton to *do for* the milk-woman's husband in the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie. But if he can't come, another can, for the pretended hackney-coach belongs to the man in mourning who has used it before. A quarter of an hour after we get to the cross-road, I will be here and wait for you."

"All right! Good by till to-morrow, Chouette."

"I had nearly forgot to give the wax to Tortillard, if there is any lock to get the print of at the farm. Here, chickabiddy, do you know how to use it?" said the one-eyed wretch to Tortillard, as she gave him a piece of wax.

"Yes, yes, my father shewed me how to use it. I took for him the print of the lock of a little iron chest which my master the quack-doctor keeps in his small closet."

"Ah, that's all right; and, that the wax may not stick, do not forget to moisten the wax after you have warmed it well in your hand."

"I know all about it," replied Tortillard.

"To-morrow, then, *fourline*," said the Chouette.

"To-morrow," replied the Schoolmaster.

The Chouette went towards the coach. The Schoolmaster and Tortillard quitted the hollow way, and bent their steps towards the farm, the lights which shone from the windows serving to guide them on their way.

Strange fatality, which again brought Anselm Duresnel under the same roof with his wife, who had not seen him since his condemnation to hard labour for life!

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN EVENING AT THE FARM.

PERHAPS a more gratifying sight does not exist than the interior of a large farm-kitchen prepared for the evening meal, especially during the winter season. Its bright wood fire, the long table covered with the savoury, smoking dishes, the huge tankards of foaming beer or cider, with the happy countenances scattered round, speak of peaceful labour and healthful industry. The farm-kitchen of Bouqueval was a fine exemplification of this remark. Its immense open chimney, about six feet high and eight feet wide, resembled the yawning mouth of some huge oven. On the hearth blazed and sparkled enormous logs of beech or oak; and from this prodigious brazier there issued forth such a body of light, as well as heat, that the large lamp suspended from the centre beam sunk into insignificance, and was rendered nearly useless. Every variety of culinary utensils, sparkling in all the brightness of the most elaborate cleanliness, and composed invariably of copper, brass, and tin, glowed in the bright radiance of the winter fire, as they stood ranged with the utmost nicety and effect on their appropriate shelves. An old-fashioned

cistern of elaborately polished copper shewed its bright face, polished as a mirror; and close beside stood a highly polished bread-trough and cover, composed of walnut-tree wood, rubbed by the hand of housewifery till you could see your face in it, and from which issued a most tempting smell of hot bread. A long and substantial table occupied the centre of the kitchen; a tablecloth, which, though coarse in texture, vied with the falling snow for whiteness, covered its entire length; while for each expected guest was placed an earthenware plate, brown without, but white within, and by its side a knife, fork, and spoon, lustrous as silver itself. In the midst of the table, an immense tureen of vegetable soup smoked like the crater of a volcano, and diffused its savoury vapours over a dish of ham and greens, flanked by a most formidable array of mutton, most relishly stewed with onions and potatoes. Below was placed a large joint of roast veal, followed by two great plates of winter salad, supported by a couple of baskets of apples; and a similar number of cheeses completed the arrangements of the table. Three or four stone pitchers filled with sparkling cider, and a like quantity of loaves of brown bread, equal in size to the stones of a windmill, were placed at the discretionary use of the supping party.

An old, shaggy, black shepherd dog, almost toothless, the superannuated patriarch of all the canine tribe employed on the farm, was, by reason of his great age and long services, indulged with permission to enjoy the cheering warmth of the chimney-corner; but, using his privilege with the utmost modesty and discretion, this venerable servitor, who answered to the pastoral name of Lysander, lay quietly stretched out in a secure side-nook, his nose resting on his paws, watching with the deepest attention the various culinary preparations which preceded the supper.

The bill of fare thus presented to the reader, as the ordinary mode of living at the farm of Bouqueval, may strike some of our readers as unnecessarily sumptuous; but Madame Georges, faithfully following out the wishes of Rodolph, endeavoured by all possible means to improve the comforts of the labourers on the farm, who were always selected as being the most worthy and industrious individuals of their district. They were well paid, liberally treated, and so kindly used, that to be engaged on the Bouqueval farm was the highest ambition of all the best labourers in that part of the country—an ambition which most essentially promoted the welfare and advantage of the masters they then served; for no applicant for employment at Bouqueval could obtain a favourable hearing, unless he came provided with most satisfactory testimonials from his last employer.

Thus, though on a very small scale, had Rodolph created a species of *model farm*, which had for its aim not only the improvement of animals and agricultural operations, but, above all, improving the nature of *man* himself; and this he effected by making it worth their while to be active, honest, and intelligent.

After having completed all the preparations for supper, and placed on the table a jug of wine to accompany the dessert, the farm-cook sounded the welcome tocsin, which told all that the cheering meal was

prepared, and, their evening toil concluded, they might freely enjoy the delights of wholesome and temperate refreshment. Ere the sound had ceased to vibrate on the ear, a merry, joyous throng, composed of men and maidens to the number of twelve or fifteen, crowded round the table; the men had open, manly countenances, the women looked healthy and good-humoured, while the young girls belonging to the party wore the brightest glow of youth and innocence. Every face was lighted up with frank gaiety, content, and the satisfaction arising from the consciousness of having well fulfilled one's duty. Thus happily prepared in mind and body to do justice to the excellent fare set before them, the happy party took their appointed places at table.

The upper end was occupied by an old white-haired labourer, whose fine, bold, yet sensible expression of face, bespoke him a descendant of the ancient Gaulish mothers of the soil.

Father Châtelain (for so was this Nestor called) had worked on the

Father Chatelain.

farm from his early childhood. When Rodolph purchased the farm, the old servant had been strongly recommended to him, and he was forthwith

raised to the rank of overlooker, and, under the orders of Madame Georges, general superintendent of all out-door work; and unbounded, indeed, was the influence possessed by Father Châtelain by virtue of his age, his knowledge, and experience.

Every one having taken their seat, Father Châtelain, having fervently invoked a blessing, then, in pursuance of an ancient and pious custom, marked one of the loaves with a figure of a cross, and cut off a large slice as the *share of the Virgin* or the *poor*, then, pouring out a glass of wine with a similar consecration to charitable purposes, he reverently placed both bread and wine on a plate placed in the centre of the table purposely to receive them. At this moment the yard dogs barked furiously; old Lysander replied by a low growl, and, curling back his upper lip, displayed two or three still formidable fangs.

"Some person is passing near the wall of the court-yard," observed Father Châtelain.

Scarcely had the words been uttered, than the bell of the great gate sounded.

"Who can this possibly be at so late an hour?" said the old labourer; "every one belonging to the place is in. Go and see who it is, Jean René."

The individual thus addressed was a stout, able-bodied young labourer on the farm, who was then busily employed blowing his scalding hot soup, with a force of lungs that Æolus himself might have envied; but, used to prompt obedience, in a moment the half-raised spoon was deposited in its place, and, half stifling a sigh of regret, he departed on his errand.

"This is the first time our good Madame Georges and Mademoiselle Marie have failed paying a visit to the warm chimney-corner, and looking on whilst we took our supper, for this long time," said Father Châtelain. "I am hungry as a hunter, but I shall not relish my supper half so well."

"Madame Georges is in the chamber of Mademoiselle Marie, who found herself somewhat indisposed on her return from escorting M. le Curé to the rectory," replied Claudine, the girl who had conducted La Goualeuse back from the rectory, and thus unconsciously frustrated the evil designs of the Chouette.

"I trust Mademoiselle Marie is only indisposed, not seriously ill, is she, Claudine?" inquired the old man, with almost paternal anxiety.

"Oh, dear no, Father Châtelain! God forbid! I hope and believe our dear mademoiselle is only just a little struck with the cold of the night, and her walk perhaps fatigued her. I trust she will be quite well by to-morrow; indeed Madame Georges told me as much, and said that, if she had had any fears, she should have sent to Paris for M. David, the Negro doctor, who took such care of mademoiselle when she was so ill. Well, I cannot make out how any one can endure a black doctor! for my part I should not have the slightest confidence in any thing he said or did. No, no! if one must have a doctor, let it be a Christian man with a white skin; but a downright blackamoor! oh, saints above! why, the very sight of him by my bedside would kill me!"

"But did not this Monsieur David cure Mademoiselle Marie from the long illness with which she suffered when she first came here?" inquired the old man.

"Yes, Father Châtelain, he certainly did."

"Well?"

"Ah! but for all that, Father Châtelain, a doctor with a black face is enough to terrify any one—I should scream myself into fits if he were to come rolling up the great whites of his eyes at me."

"But is not this M. David the same person who cured Dame Anica of that dreadful wound in her leg, which had confined her to her bed for upwards of three years?"

"Yes, exactly so, Father Châtelain; he certainly did set old Dame Anica up again."

"Well, then, my child?"

"Nay, but only think!—a black man! and when one is ill, too! when one can so ill bear up against such horrid things. If he were only a LITTLE dark, or even *deep* BROWN, but quite, QUITE a black—all black—oh, Father Châtelain, I really cannot bring myself to think of it!"

"Tell me, my child, what colour is your favourite heifer Musette?"

"Oh, white—white as a swan, Father Châtelain; and such a milcher! I can say that for the poor thing without the least falsehood, a better cow we have not got on the farm."

"And your other favourite, Rosette?"

"Rosette? oh, she is as black as a raven, not one white hair about her I should say; and, indeed, to do her justice, she is a first-rate milcher also. I hardly know which is the best, she or my pretty Musette."

"And what coloured milk does she give?"

"Why, white, of course, Father Châtelain; I really thought you knew that."

"Is her milk as white and as good as the milk of your snowy pet Musette?"

"Every bit as good in colour and quality."

"Although Rosette is a black cow?"

"To be sure! why, Father Châtelain, what difference can it possibly make to the milk whether the cow that gives it is black, white, red, or brown?"

"How, then, my good girl, can it in any way signify whether a doctor has a black or white skin, or what his complexion may be?"

"Well," answered Claudine, fairly hunted into a corner from which no argument could rescue her,—"well, as regards what makes a black doctor not so good as a white one, it is—it is, because a black skin is so very ugly to look at, and a white one is so much more agreeable to one's eyes: I'm sure I can't think of any other reason, Father Châtelain, if I try for ever; but with cows the colour of the skin makes not the very least difference, of that you may be assured; but, then, you know there's a deal of difference between a cow and a man."

These not very clear physiognomical reflections of Claudine, touching the effect of light or dark skins in the human and animal race, were

interrupted by the return of Jean René, blowing his fingers with animation as he had before blown his soup.

" Oh, how cold! how cold it is this night!" exclaimed he, on entering; " it is enough to freeze one to death: it is a pretty deal more snug and comfortable in-doors than out this bitter night. Oh, how cold it is!"

" Why, ' The frost that cometh from North and East
Biteth the most and ceaseth the least.'
Don't you know that, my lad?" said the old superintendant Châtelain. " But who was it that rang so late?"

" A poor blind man and a boy who leads him about, Father Châtelain."

" And what does this poor blind man want?" inquired Châtelain.

" The poor man and his son were going by the cross-road to Louvres, and have lost themselves in the snow; and as the cold is enough to turn a man into an icicle, and the night is pitch dark, the poor blind father has come to entreat permission for himself and lad to pass the night on the farm: he says he shall be for ever thankful for leave to lie on a little straw under a hovel, or in any out-building."

" Oh, as for that, I am quite sure that Madame Georges, who never refuses charity to any unfortunate being, will willingly permit them to do so; but we must first acquaint her with it: go, Claudine, and tell her the whole story." Claudine disappeared.

" And where is this poor man waiting?" asked Father Châtelain.

" In the little barn just by."

" But why in the barn? why put him there?"

" Bless you, if I had left him in the yard, the dogs would have eaten him up alive! Why, Father Châtelain, it was no use for me to call out ' Quiet, Médor! come here, Turk! down, Sultan!' I never saw dogs in

such a fury. And, besides, we don't use our dogs on the farm to fly at poor folks, as they are trained to do at other places."

"Well, my lads, it seems that the '*share for the poor*' has not been laid aside in vain to-night. But try and sit a little closer; there, that 'ill do; now put two more plates and knives and forks for this blind traveller and his boy, for I feel quite certain what Madame Georges' answer will be, and that she will desire them to be housed here for the night."

"It is really a thing I can't make out," said Jean René, "about the dogs being so very violent, especially Turk, who went with Claudine this evening to the rectory. Why, when I stroked him, to try and pacify him, I felt his coat standing up on end like so many bristles of a porcupine. Now what do you say to that, eh, Father Châtelain — you who know almost every thing?"

"Why, my lad, I, *who know every thing*, say just this, that the beasts know far more than I do, and can see farther. I remember, in the autumn, when the heavy rains had so swollen the little river, I was returning with my team-horses one dark night—I was riding upon Cuckoo, the old roan horse, and, deuce take me, if I could make out any spot it would be safe to wade through, for the night was as dark as the mouth of a pit. Well, I threw the bridle on old Cuckoo's back, and he soon found what, I'll answer for it, none of us could have discovered. Now who taught the dumb brute to know the safe from the unsafe parts of the stream, let me ask you?

"Ay, Father Châtelain, that's what I was waiting to ask you. Who taught the old roan to discover danger and escape from it so cleverly?"

"The same Almighty wisdom which instructs the swallow to build in our chimneys, and guides the marten to make his nest among the reeds of our banks, my lad. Well, Claudine," said the ancient oracle of the kitchen to the blooming dairymaid, who just then entered, bearing on her arms two pairs of snowy white sheets, from which an odoriferous smell of

sage and thyme was wafted along—"well, I make no doubt but Madame Georges has sent permission for these poor creatures, the blind man and his child, to sleep here, has she not?"

"These sheets are to prepare beds for them, in the little room at the end of the passage," said Claudine.

"Go and bid them come in, then, Jean René; and you, Claudine, my good girl, put a couple of chairs near the fire—they will be glad of a good warm before sitting down to table.

The furious barking of the dogs was now renewed, mingled with the voice of Jean René, who was endeavouring to pacify them; the door of the kitchen was abruptly opened, and the Schoolmaster and Tortillard entered with as much precipitation as though they feared a pursuit from some dangerous foe.

"For the love of Heaven, keep off your dogs!" cried the Schoolmaster, in the utmost terror; "they have been trying to bite us!"

"They have torn a great bit out of my blouse," whined Tortillard, shivering with cold and pale with fear.

"Don't be frightened, good man," said Jean René, shutting the door securely; "but I never before saw our dogs in such a perfect fury—it must be the cold makes them so spiteful; perhaps, being half frozen, they fancied biting you would serve to warm them—there is no knowing what mere animals may mean by what they do."

"Why, are you going to begin, too?" exclaimed the old farmer, as Lysander, who had hitherto lain perfectly happy in the radiance of the glowing fire, started up, and, growling fiercely, was about to fly at the strangers. "This old dog is quiet enough, but, having heard the other dogs make such a furious noise, he thinks he must do the same. Will you lie down and be quiet, you old brute? Do you hear, sir? lie down!"

At these words from Father Châtelain, accompanied by a significant motion of the foot, Lysander, with a low deep growl of dissatisfaction, slowly returned to his favourite corner by the hearth, while the Schoolmaster and Tortillard remained trembling by the kitchen-door, as though fearful of approaching farther. The features of the ruffian were so hideous, from the frightful effects produced by the cold, that some of the servants in the kitchen shuddered with alarm, while others recoiled in disgust: this impression was not lost on Tortillard, who felt reassured by the terrors of the villagers, and even felt proud of the repulsiveness of his companion. This first confusion over, Father Châtelain, thinking only of worthily discharging the duties of hospitality, said to the Schoolmaster,

"Come, my good friend—come near the fire and warm yourself thoroughly, and then you shall have some supper with us; for you happened to come very fortunately, just as we were sitting down to table. Here, sit down, just where I have placed your chair. But what am I thinking about?" added the worthy old labourer. "I ought to have spoken to your son, not you, seeing that it has pleased God to take away your eysight—a heavy loss, a heavy loss; but let us hope all for your good, my friend, though you may not now think so. Here, my boy, lead your father to that snug place in the chimney-corner."

"Yes, kind sir," drawled out Tortillard, with a nasal twang and canting, hypocritical tone; "may God bless you for your charity to the poor blind! Here, father, take my arm; lean on my shoulder, father; take care,

take care, gently;" and, with affected zeal and tenderness, the urchin guided the steps of the brigand till they reached the indicated spot. As

the pair approached Lysander, he uttered a low growling noise; but as the Schoolmaster brushed past him, and the sagacious animal had full scent of his garments, he broke out into one of those deep howls with which, it is asserted by the superstitious, dogs frequently announce an approaching death.

"What, in the devil's name, do all these cursed animals mean by their confounded noise?" said the Schoolmaster to himself. "Can they smell the blood on my clothes, I wonder? for, I now recollect I wore the trousers I have on at present the night the cattle-dealer was murdered."

"Did you notice that?" inquired Jean René of Father Châtelain. "Why, I vow that, as often as old Lysander had caught scent of the wandering stranger, he actually set up a regular *death-howl*."

And this remark was followed up by a most singular confirmation of

the fact; the cries of Lysander were so loud and mournful, that the other dogs caught the sound (for the farm-yard was only separated from the kitchen by a glazed window in the latter), and, according to the custom of the canine race, they each strove who should outdo the other in repeating and prolonging the funereal wail, which, according to vulgar belief, always foretells death. Though but little given to superstitious dread, the farm-people looked from one to another with a feeling of wonder not unmixed with awe. Even the Schoolmaster himself, diabolically hardened as he was, felt a cold shudder steal over him at the thought that all these fatal sounds burst forth upon the approach of him—the self-convicted murderer! while Tortillard, too audacious and hardened to enter into such alarms, with all the infidelity in which he had been trained, even from his mother's arms, looked on with delighted mockery at the universal panic, and was, perhaps, the only person present devoid of an uneasy feeling; but, once freed from his apprehensions of suffering from the violence of the animals, he listened even with pleasure to the horrible discord of their long drawn-out wailings, and felt almost tempted to pardon them the fright they had originally occasioned him, in consideration of the perfect terror they had struck into the inhabitants of the farm, and for the gratification he derived from the convulsive horror of the Schoolmaster. But after the momentary stupor had passed away Jean René again quitted the kitchen, and the loud cracking of his whip soon put an end to the prophetic howlings of Médor, Turk, and Sultan, and quickly dispersed them to their separate kennels, and as the noise ceased the gloomy cloud passed away from the kitchen, and the peasants looked up with the same honest cheerfulness they had worn upon the entrance of the two travellers. Ere long they had left off wondering at the repulsive ugliness of the Schoolmaster, and only thought with pity of his great affliction, in being blind; they commiserated the lameness of the poor boy, admired the interesting sharpness of his countenance, the deep, cute glance of his ever-moving eye, and, above all, loaded him with praises for the extreme care and watchfulness with which he attended to his afflicted parent. The appetite of the labourers, which had been momentarily forgotten, now returned with redoubled violence, and for a time nothing could be heard but the clattering of plates and rattling of knives and forks. Still, however busily employed with their suppers, the servants assembled round the table, both male and female, could not but remark, with infinite pleasure, the tender assiduity of the lad towards the blind creature who sat beside him. Nothing could exceed the devoted affection and filial care with which Tortillard prepared his meat for him, cutting both that and his bread with most accurate nicety, pouring out his drink, and never attempting even to taste a morsel himself, till his father expressed himself as having completed his supper. But, for all this dutiful attention, the young ruffian took ample and bitter revenge. Instigated as much by an innate spirit of cruelty as the desire of imitation natural to his age, Tortillard found an equal enjoyment with the Chouette in having something to torment (*a bête de souffrance*); and it was a matter of inexpressible exultation to his wretched mind that *he*, a poor, distorted, crippled, abject creature, should have it in *his* power to tyrannise over so powerful and ferocious a creature as the Schoolmaster,—

it was like torturing a muzzled tiger. He even refined his gratification, by compelling his victim to endure all the agonies he inflicted, without wincing or exhibiting the slightest external sign of his suffering. Thus he accompanied each outward mark of devoted tenderness towards his supposed parent, by aiming a severe kick against the Schoolmaster's legs, on one of which there was (in common with many who had long worked in the galleys) a deep and severe wound, the effect of the heavy iron chain worn during the term of punishment round the right leg; and, by way of compelling the miserable sufferer to exercise a greater degree of Stoical courage, the urchin always seized the moment when the object of his malice was either drinking or speaking.

"Here, dear father! here is a nice peeled nut," said Tortillard, placing on the plate of his supposed parent a nut carefully prepared.

"Good boy," said old Châtelain, smiling kindly at him. Then, addressing the bandit, he added, "However great may be your affliction, my friend, so good a son is almost sufficient to make up even for the loss of sight: but Providence is so gracious, He never takes away one blessing without sending another."

"You are quite right, kind sir! My lot is a very hard one, and, but for the noble conduct of my excellent child, I ——"

A sharp cry of irrepressible anguish here broke from the quivering lips of the tortured man; the son of Bras Rouge had this time aimed his blow so effectually, that the point of his heavy-nailed shoe had reached the very centre of the wound, and produced unendurable agony.

"Father! dear father! what is the matter?" exclaimed Tortillard, in a whimpering voice; then, suddenly rising, he threw both his arms round the Schoolmaster's neck, whose first impulse of rage and pain was to stifle the limping varlet in his Herculean grasp: and so powerfully did he compress the boy's chest against his own, that his impeded respiration vented itself in a low moaning sound. A few minutes, and Tortillard's last prank would have been played; but, reflecting that the lad was for the present indispensable to the furtherance of the schemes he had on hand, the Schoolmaster, by a violent effort, controlled his desire to annihilate his tormentor, and contented himself with pushing him off his shoulders back into his own chair. The sympathising group around the table were far from seeing through all this, and merely considered these close embraces as an interchange of paternal and filial tenderness, while the half suffocation and deadly pallor of Tortillard they attributed to emotion caused by the sudden illness of his beloved father.

"What ailed you just now, my good man?" inquired Father Châtelain; "only see, you have quite frightened your poor boy. Why, he looks pale as death, and can scarcely breathe. Come, my little man; you must not take on so — your father is all right again."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen all," replied the Schoolmaster, controlling himself with much difficulty, for the pain he was still enduring was most excruciating. "I am better now. I'll tell you, with your kind leaves, all about it. You see I am by trade a working locksmith, and, one day that I was employed in beating out a huge bar of red hot iron, it fell over on my two legs, and burnt them so dreadfully, that it has never healed; unfortunately, just now, I happened to strike the leg that is worst against the table, and the sudden agony it occasioned me drew

forth the sudden cry which so much disturbed all this good company, and for which I humbly beg pardon."

"Poor dear father!" whined out Tortillard, casting a look of fiendish malice at the shivering Schoolmaster, and wholly recovered from his late attack of excessive emotion. "Poor father! you have indeed got a bad leg nobody can cure. Ah, kind gentlemen, I hope you will never have such a shocking wound, and be obliged to hear all the doctors say it never will get well. No! never—never. Oh, my dear, dear father! how I wish I could but suffer the pain instead of you!"

At this tender, moving speech, the females present expressed the utmost admiration for the dutiful speaker, and began feeling in their vast pockets for some more substantial mark of their regard.

"It is unlucky, my honest friend," said old Châtelain, addressing the Schoolmaster, "you had not happened to come to this farm about three weeks ago, instead of to-night."

"And why so, if you please?"

"Because we had staying for a few days in the house a celebrated Paris doctor, who has an infallible remedy for all diseases of the legs. A worthy old woman, belonging to our village, had been confined to her bed upwards of three years with some affection of the legs. Well, this doctor, being here, as I said, heard of the case, applied an unguent to the wounds, and now, bless you, she is as surefooted, ay, and as swift too, as any of our young girls; and the first holiday she makes she intends walking to the house of her benefactor, in the Allée des Veuves, at Paris, to return her grateful thanks. To be sure it is a good step from hence, but then, as Mother Anica says —— Why, what has come over you again, my friend? is your leg still so painful?"

The mention of the Allée des Veuves had recalled such frightful recollections to the Schoolmaster, that, involuntarily, a cold shudder shook his frame, while a fearful spasm, by contracting his ghastly countenance, made it appear still more hideous.

"Yes," replied he, trying to conceal his emotion, "a sudden darting pain seized me, and —— Pray excuse my interrupting your kind and sensible discourse, and be pleased to proceed."

"It really is a great pity," resumed the old labourer, "that this excellent doctor should not be with us at present; but I tell you what, he is as good as he is skilful, and I am quite sure, if you let your little lad conduct you to his house when you return to Paris, that he will cure you. His address is not difficult to recollect, it is 17 Allée des Veuves. Even should you forget the number, it will not matter, for there are but very few doctors in the neighbourhood, and no other Negro surgeon—for only imagine this clever, kind, and charitable man is a black, but his heart is white and good. His name is David—Doctor David—you will be able to remember that name I dare say."

The features of the Schoolmaster were so seamed and scarred that it was difficult to perceive when his colour varied. He did, however, on the present occasion, turn ghastly pale as he first heard the exact number mentioned of Rodolph's house, and afterwards the description of the black doctor—of David, the Negro surgeon, who, by Rodolph's orders, had inflicted on him the fearful punishment, the terrible results of which were each hour more painfully developed. Father Châtelain, however,

was too much interested in his subject to notice the deadly paleness of the Schoolmaster, and proceeded with his discourse:—

"When you leave us, my poor fellow, we will be sure to write his address on a slip of paper and give it to your son, for I know that, besides putting you in a certain way to be cured of your painful wound, it will be gratifying to M. David to be able to relieve your sufferings. Oh, he is so good—never so happy as when he has rendered any person a service. I wish he had not always that mournful and dejected look. I fear he has some heavy care near his heart; and he so good, so full of pity for all who suffer. Well, well, Providence will bless him in another world; but come, friend, let us drink to the health and happiness of your future benefactor—here take this mug."

"No, thank you!" returned the Schoolmaster, with a gloomy air; "none for me. I—I am not thirsty, and I never drink unless I am."

"Nay, friend, but this is good old wine I have poured out for you;

not cider," said the labourer. "Many tradespeople do not drink as good. Bless your heart, this farm is not conducted as other farms are—what do you think of our style of living, by the by? have you relished your supper?"

"All very good," responded the Schoolmaster mechanically, more and more absorbed in the painfulness of his ideas.

"Well, then, as we live one day, so we do another. We work well, we live well, we have a good conscience, and an equally good bed to rest upon after the labours of the day. Our lives roll on in peace and contentment. There are seven labourers constantly employed on the farm, who are paid almost double wages to what others get; but then I can venture to assert, that if we are paid double, we do as much work among us as fourteen ordinary labourers would do. The mere husbandry servants have one hundred and fifty crowns a-year, the dairy-women and other females engaged about the place sixty crowns, and a tenth share of the produce of the farm is divided among us all. You may suppose we

do not idle away much time, or fail to make hay while the sun shines, for Nature is a bountiful mother, and ever returns a hundredfold to those who assiduously seek her favour; the more we give her, the more she returns."

"Your master cannot get very rich if he treats you and pays you thus liberally," said the Schoolmaster.

"Oh, our master is different to all others, and has a mode of repaying himself peculiarly his own."

"From what you say," answered the blind man, hoping by engaging in conversation to escape from the gloominess of his own thoughts, "your master must be a very extraordinary person."

"Indeed he is, my good man, a most uncommon master to meet with. Now as chance has brought you among us, and a strange though a lucky chance for you it has proved, lying out of the highroad as this village does, it is so very seldom any stranger ever finds it out. Well, I was going to say, here you are, and no fault to find with your quarters, is there? Now, in all human probability, when you turn your back upon the place, you will never return to it, but you shall not depart without hearing from me a description of our master and all he has done for the farm, upon condition that you promise to repeat it again wherever you go, and to whomsoever you may meet with. You will see — I mean, I beg pardon, you will then be able to understand."

"I listen to you," answered the Schoolmaster; "proceed."

"And I can promise you you will not be throwing away your time by listening," replied the venerable Châtelain. "Now one day our master thought all at once: 'Here am I, rich enough to eat two dinners a-day if I liked, but I don't. Now suppose I were to provide a meal for those who have none at all, and enable such as can barely procure half a dinner to enjoy as much good food as they desired, would not that be better than over-indulging myself? So it shall be,' says he, and away he goes to work, and, first thing, he buys this farm, which was not much of a concern then, and scarcely kept a couple of ploughs at work; and, being born and bred on the place, I ought to know something about it. Next, master made considerable additions to the farm. I'll tell you all about that by and by. At the head of the farm he placed a most worthy and respectable female, who had known a great deal of trouble in her past life—master always chose out people for their goodness and their misfortunes,—and, when he brought the person I am telling you of here, he said to her in my hearing, 'I wish this place to be like the temple of our great Maker, open to the deserving and the afflicted, but closed against the wicked and hardened reprobate.' So idle beggars are always turned from the gate; but those who are able and willing to work have always the opportunity set before them: the *charity of labour*, our master says, is no humiliation to him who receives it, but a favour and service conferred on the person whose labour is thus done; and the rich man, who does not act upon this principle, but ill employs his wealth. So said our master. But he did more than talk—he acted. There was formerly a road from here to Ecouen, which cut off a good mile of distance, but, Lord love you! it was one great rutty bog, impossible to get up or down it; it was the death of every horse, and certain destruction to every vehicle that attempted to pass through it. A little labour, and a trifling amount of money, from each farmer in the

adjoining country, would soon have repaired the road; but they never could be brought to any unanimity on the subject, and, in proportion as one farmer would be anxious to contribute towards putting the road in order, the others would invariably decline sending either men or money to assist. So our master, perceiving all this, said, 'The road shall be repaired; but as those who can afford to contribute will not, and as it is more for convenience and accommodation to the rich than necessity for the poor, it shall first become useful to those who would work if they could get it to do, who have heart, and hands, and courage, but no employ. Well, this road shall be reserved as a constant occupation for persons of this description. Horsemen, and carriages belonging to the rich and affluent, who care not how roads are repaired, so they can travel at their ease, may go round by the farther side.' So, for example, whenever a strong, sturdy fellow presented himself at the farm, pleading hunger and want of work, I'd say to him, 'Here, my lad; here is a basin of warm, nourishing soup—take it and welcome: then, if you wish for work, here is a pickaxe and spade, one of our people will shew you the Ecouen road, make every day twelve feet of it good, by spreading and breaking the flints; and every evening, after your work is examined, you shall receive at the rate of forty sous for the quantity named; twenty sous for half as much; and ten sous for a quarter; for less than that, nothing at all.' Then, towards evening, upon my return from labour, I used to go on the road, measure their work, and examine whether it was well done."

"And only to think," interposed Jean René, in a fit of virtuous indig-

nation,—"only think, now, of there coming two heartless vagabonds, who drank their soup and walked off with the pickaxe and shovel. It is enough to sicken one of doing good or trying to benefit one's fellow-creatures."

"Quite right, Master René," exclaimed the other labourers; "so it is."

"Come, come, lads," resumed Father Châtelain, "don't be too warm. Just see here! We might as well say it is useless to plant trees, or

sow grain, because there are caterpillars, weevils, and other injurious insects, that gnaw the leaves or devour the seeds put in the ground. No, no! we destroy the vermin. But God Almighty, who is no niggard, causes fresh buds to burst forth and new ears of corn to sprout; the damage is abundantly repaired, and no trace remains of the mischievous insects which have passed over our work. Am I not right, my friend?" said the old labourer, addressing the Schoolmaster.

"No doubt—no doubt," replied the latter, who had appeared for some time past lost in a train of serious meditation.

"Then, as for women and children, there is plenty of occupation for them also, according to their age and strength," added Father Châtelain.

"Yet, spite of all this," observed Claudine, joining in the conversation, "the road gets on but very slowly."

"Which only goes to prove, my good girl, that in this part of the country there is happily no scarcity of employment for the honest and industrious labourer."

"But now, as in the case of a poor, helpless, afflicted creature such as I am," said the Schoolmaster, hastily, "would not the worthy owner of the farm grant me a humble corner in it for charity's sake—a shelter and a morsel of bread for the little while I have to remain a burden to any one in this troublesome world? Oh, my worthy sir, could I but obtain such a boon, I would pass the remainder of my days in praying for a blessing on my benefactor."

And these words were really pronounced in entire sincerity of meaning; not that compunction for his many crimes touched the brigand's stony heart, but he contrasted the happy peacefulness of the lives of these labourers to his own wretched, stormy existence; and still further did he envy them when he reflected upon all that the Chouette might have in store for him: he shuddered as he reflected upon the future she would provide for him, and more than ever regretted, by having recalled his old accomplice, having for ever lost the means of dwelling with good and honest persons, such as those with whom the Chourineur had placed him. Father Châtelain surveyed the Schoolmaster with an air of surprise.

"My good man," said he, "I did not know you were so utterly destitute."

"Alas! yes, it is even so. I lost my sight by an accident while working at my trade. I am going to Louvres to endeavour to find a distant relation there, who, I hope, may be willing to assist me. But, you are aware, people are not always so open-hearted as they should be; they do not like distressed objects, such as myself, coming to claim kindred, and are frequently harsh and unkind," answered the Schoolmaster, sighing deeply.

"But the most selfish heart would grieve at your distress," replied the old labourer. "The most hard-hearted relative would pity a man like you—a good and honest workman overtaken by a sudden calamity, and left without hope or help. Then the moving spectacle of this young and tender child, your only friend and guide, would wring pity from the very stones. But how is it that the master for whom you worked previously to your accident has done nothing for you?"

"He is now dead," said the Schoolmaster, after a short hesitation; "and he was my only friend upon earth."

"But then there is the hospital for the blind."

"I am not the right age to qualify me for admission."

"Poor man! yours is, indeed, a hard case."

"Do you think it likely that, in the event of my relation at Louvres refusing to assist me, your master, whom I already respect without knowing, would take pity on me?"

"Unfortunately, you see, the farm is not a hospital. Our general rule is to grant all infirm or afflicted travellers a temporary shelter of a night or a day in the house. Then some assistance is furnished, and they are put on their road with a prayer to kind Providence to take them under its charge."

"Then you think there is no hope of interesting your master in my unhappy fate?" asked the brigand, with a sigh of regret.

"I tell you what is the general custom here, my good man; but so compassionate a person as our master might go any lengths to serve you."

"Do you really think so?" said the Schoolmaster. "Oh, if he would but permit me to remain here, I could live in any retired corner, and be happy and grateful for such a mere trifle of subsistence!"

"As I said before, our master is capable of the most generous actions. But, were he to consent to your remaining at the farm, there would be no occasion for you to hide yourself; you would fare in every respect as you have seen us treated to-day. Some occupation would be found for your son suitable to his age and strength. He would not want for good instruction or wise counsels; our venerable minister would teach him with the other children of the village, and, in the words of Scripture, he would grow in goodness and in stature beneath the pious care of our excellent curé. But the best way for you to manage this will be to lay every particular of your case and petition before our 'Lady of Ready Help,' when she comes into the kitchen, as she is sure to do before you start on your journey to-morrow morning."

"What name did you call your lady by?"

"Nay, I meant our mistress, who always goes by that appellation amongst us. If she interests herself for you, your suit will be granted; for, in matters of charity, our master never opposes her smallest wish."

"Oh, then," exclaimed the Schoolmaster, in a joyous tone, already exulting in his hoped-for deliverance from the power of the Chouette, "I will thankfully follow your advice, and speak to her whenever I have the blessed opportunity!"

This hope found no echo in the mind of Tortillard, who felt not the slightest disposition to avail himself of the offers of the old labourer, and grow up in goodness under the auspices of the venerable curé. The inclinations of Bras Rouge's son were any thing but rural, neither did his turn of mind incline to the pastoral. Faithful to the code of morality professed by the Chouette, and promulgated by her, he would have been severely distressed to see the Schoolmaster emancipate himself from their united tyranny; and he now thought it high time to recall the brigand from the illusory visions of flowery meads and all the *et-cæteras* of a country life, in which his fancy seemed revelling, to the realities of his present position.

"Yes, oh, yes," repeated the Schoolmaster; "I will assuredly address my prayers to your 'Lady of Ready Help.' She will pity me and kindly——"

Tortillard here interrupted him by a vigorous and artfully managed kick, so well directed, that, as before, it took the direst effect on the most

sensitive spot. The intense agony for a time quite bereft the brigand of speech or breath; but, remembering the fatal consequences of giving way to the feelings which boiled within him, he struggled for self-command, and, after a pause of a few minutes, added, in a faint and suffering voice, "Yes, I venture to hope your good mistress would pity and befriend me."

"Dear father," said Tortillard, in a hypocritical tone, "you forget my poor dear aunt, Madame la Chouette, who is so fond of you. Poor Aunty Chouette!—she would never part with you so easily, I know. Directly she heard of your staying here, she would come along with M. Barbillon and fetch you away—that she would, I know."

"Madame la Chouette and M. Barbillon! Why this honest man seems to have relations among all the 'birds of the air and fishes of the sea,'" uttered Jean René in a voice of mirthful irony, giving his neighbour rather a vigorous poke with his elbow. "Funny, is n't it, Claudine?"

"Oh, you great unfeeling calf! How can you make a joke of these poor creatures?" replied the tender-hearted dairy-maid, returning Jean René's thrust with sufficient interest to compromise the safety of his ribs.

"Is Madame la Chouette a relation of yours?" inquired the old labourer of the Schoolmaster.

"Yes, a distant one," answered the other, with a dull, dejected manner.

"And is she the person you were going to Louvres to try and find?" asked Father Châtelain.

"She is," replied the blind man; "but I think my son overrates her zeal on my account. However, under any circumstances, I shall speak to your excellent lady to-morrow, and entreat her aid to further my request with the kind, charitable owner of this farm; but," added he, purposely to divert the conversation into another channel, and so put an end to the imprudent remarks of Tortillard, "talking of farms, you promised to explain to me the difference that exists in the management of this farm and farms in general."

"I did so," replied Father Châtelain, "and I will keep my word. Now, after having planned all I told you about the *charity of labour*, our master said to himself, 'There are many institutions where plans are devised, and rewards assigned, for improvements in the breed of horses, cattle, sheep, and other animals, for the best-constructed ploughs, and other agricultural implements. And I cannot help thinking that all this time we are not going to the fountain-head, and beginning, as we ought to begin, by improving the condition of the labouring classes themselves, before we give all this heed to the beast which perisheth. Good beasts are capital things, but good men are better, and more difficult to meet with. Give your horses and cattle plenty of good food, clear running water; place them either out of doors in a fine healthy atmosphere, or give them a clean well-managed stable, with good and regular attendance; and they will thrive to your heart's content, and be capable of reaching any degree of excellence. But with men, look you, it is quite another thing. You cannot elevate a man's mind as you can fatten an ox. The animal fattens on his pasture, because its taste gratifies his palate; he eats because he likes what he feeds on, and his body profits and thrives in proportion to the pleasure with which he has devoured his food. Well then, my opinion is, that to make good advice really profitable to men, they should be enabled clearly to perceive their own personal advantage in following it."

"Just as the ox is profited by eating the fine grass that grows around him, Father Châtelain?" said several voices.

"Precisely the same."

"But, Father Châtelain," exclaimed another voice, "I have heard talk of a sort of farm where young thieves, who might in other respects have conducted themselves very well, are taken in, taught all sorts of farming knowledge, and fed and treated like princes."

"You have heard quite right, my good fellow, there is such an institution; and, as far as it goes, it is founded on pure and just motives, and is calculated to do much good. We should never despair for the wicked, but we should also hope all things for the good. Suppose now a strong, healthy, and industrious young man, of excellent character, ready and willing to work, but desirous of receiving good instruction in his way of life, were to present himself at the place you were speaking of—this

farm of reclaimed thieves—well, the first question would be, 'Well, my chap, are you a rogue and a vagabond?' 'No!' 'Oh, then we can't receive you here—we've no room for honest lads.'"

"What you say, father, is right—every word of it," rejoined Jean René. "Rascals are provided for, while honest men want; and beasts are considered, and their condition continually improved, while men are passed over and left in ignorance and neglect."

"It was purposely to remedy what you complain of, my brave lad, that our master took this farm (as I was mentioning to our blind visitor). 'I know very well,' said he, 'that honest men will be rewarded *on high;* but then, you see, it is far and long to look forward to, and there are many (and much to be pitied are they) who can neither look to such a distance, nor wait with patience the indefinite period which bids them live on hope alone. Then how are these poor, depressed, and toil-worn creatures to find leisure thus to seek religious comfort? Rising at the first dawn of day, they toil and labour with weary limbs, till night releases them and sends them to their wretched hovels. Sunday is spent by them at the public-house drinking, to drive away the recollections both of their past and future wretchedness. Neither can these poor beings turn their very hardships to a good account by extracting a useful moral from them. After a hard day's work does their bread seem less coarse and

black, their pallet less hard, their infants less sickly and meagre, their wives less worn down by giving nourishment to the feeble babes of their breast? No, no!—far from it. Alas, the thin, half-starved mother is but ill calculated to nourish another, when she is obliged to yield her slender share of the family meal to still the clamours of her famishing children! Yet all this might be endured—ay, even cheerfully; for use has familiarised them with hardships and privations: their bread *is* food, though coarse and homely; their straw bed rests their weary limbs; and their children, though stunted and sickly, live on. All these, I say, could be borne, did no comparison arise between their own poverty and the condition of others; but, when they visit the town or city on market-days, they see an abundance of good white loaves crowding the windows of the bakers' shops, warm soft mattrasses and blankets are displayed for sale to such as have the means of purchasing; children fresh and blooming as the flowers of May are playing joyously about, and even from the super-abundance of their meals casting a portion to the dogs and other pet animals. Ah! human courage gives way at this reverse in the picture of human condition; and when the tired, care-worn men return to their mud hovels, their black bread and straw pallet, and are surrounded by a number of squalid, half-starved, wailing infants, to whom they would gladly have brought the share of cakes and buns thrown by the pampered children of great towns in the streets, or cast to the animals,—then bitter discontent and repining take possession of their mind, and, utterly forgetting that ON HIGH is One who careth for all, they say, 'Why is this difference allowed? and, if there must be both rich and poor in the world, why were not we born to riches? why should not every man have his turn in worldly prosperity? We are not justly used or fairly treated in being always poor and hard worked.' Of course, all this is both sinful and unreasonable; neither does it in any manner serve to lighten their load; and yet they must go on, bending, staggering under the burden too heavy for them to bear, till they sink, utterly exhausted and worn out. They must toil, toil on, without hope, without relaxing their daily efforts, or without once daring to entertain the idea that, by a long continuance in honest, virtuous, industrious conduct, the day might come when, like the great Creator of all, they might rest from their labours, and behold peaceful ease succeeding the hard-griping hand of poverty. Think of a whole life passed thus, in one continued struggle for the bare means of life, without a glimmer of hope to cheer the thorny path! What must such a life be like? Why, it would resemble one long rainy day, without a single ray of brightness from the blessed sun to help us through it. Then labour is resumed with an unwilling and dissatisfied spirit. 'What does it signify to us,' cry the worn-out labourers, 'whether the harvest yields ill or well? whether the ears of corn be heavy or light makes no difference to us. Why should we over-work ourselves, or trouble our heads with matters that only concern our master? it is sufficient for us to act with strict honesty. We will not commit any crime, because there are laws ready to punish such as do; but neither will we try to perform acts of goodness, because for those the laws provide no recompense.' Such a mode of arguing, my boys, is as unwise as it is wrong and sinful; but, depend upon it, it is true to nature. From this indifference comes

idleness, and from idleness to crime the distance is very short. Now unfortunately, among the class I have been describing, the far greater proportion consists of those whose conduct may be considered as neither good nor bad, that is to say, without any particular leaning either way, and, consequently, a mere trifle might firmly enlist them in the service of virtue or vice. These are the very individuals,' continued our master, 'we ought to try and improve, just as we should have done had they been born to the honour of figuring as animals with hoofs, horns, or woolly coats. Let us continue to point out to them how completely it is to their interest to be active, industrious, steady, and well qualified to discharge their several duties; let us effectually convince them that, by becoming better men, they will also be much happier; let them see how closely their good behaviour and prosperity are interwoven; and, that good advice may sink the deeper into their hearts, give them as it were such a taste of earthly comfort as shall, in a slight degree, communicate to them the hope and notion of expecting the unspeakable reward prepared by the Great Giver of all, whose dwelling is on high.'

"Having well arranged his plans, our master caused it to be made known in the environs that he wished to engage twelve farm-servants, six men and six females; but that his choice would be entirely regulated by the most satisfactory certificates of good conduct obtained from the civil and religious authorities in their native place. They were to be paid like princes, fed upon the best food to their hearts' content; and further, a tenth part of the produce of the harvest was to be shared among the labourers. The engagement at the farm was to last but two years, at the end of which time they were to give place to other labourers, chosen upon the same terms; but, at the expiration of five years, the original labourers were taken on again, in the event of there being any vacancies: so that, since the establishment of this farm, it is usual for the labourers and working classes in the neighbourhood to say, 'Let us be active, honest, and industrious, so as to obtain a high character for such good qualities, and, perhaps, one day we may be fortunate to get engaged at Bouqueval Farm. There, for a couple of years, we shall lead a life of perfect happiness. We shall learn our business thoroughly; we shall save a little money, so that, when our time is up, every one will be glad to engage us, because they know that we must have had first-rate characters to have been admitted on the establishment at all.'"

"I am already bespoke by M. Dubreuil for his farm at Arnouville," said Jean René.

"And I am engaged to a first-rate service at Gonesse," chimed in another labourer.

"You see, my good friend, by this plan every body is a gainer, the neighbouring farmers particularly. There are but twelve places for servants on the farm, but there are, perhaps, fifty candidates who have all earned their right to solicit an engagement by certificates and testimonials of excellent conduct. Well, though thirty-eight out of the fifty must be disappointed, yet the good which is in them will still remain; and there are so many good and deserving characters in the environs we can safely reckon upon: for, though they have failed in this application, they still live in hopes of succeeding another time. Why, for every prize animal to which

the medal is assigned, whether for swiftness, strength, or beauty, there must be a hundred or more trained to stand forward and dispute the choice; and those animals rejected do not lose in any of those qualifications because they were not accepted: far from it; their value is acknowledged, and they quickly find persons desirous of possessing them. Now, friend," said Father Châtelain, having fairly talked himself out of breath, "do you not confess that I was right when I said ours was no common farm, any more than our employer was no ordinary master?"

"Indeed," said the Schoolmaster, "your account is most interesting, and fully bears out all you asserted. But, the more I hear of the exalted views and noble generosity of your master, the more earnestly do I pray he may be induced to look with pity on my wretched condition. To such a man, so filled with a desire to improve the condition of God's creatures, a charitable action more or less would make but little difference. Oh, tell me beforehand his name, and that of your kind Lady of the Ready Help, that I may already bless and thank them; for full certain am I, minds so bent upon good deeds will never turn a deaf ear to my petition."

"Now I dare say you expect to be told the high-sounding titles of some great, grand personages. But, bless you! no such thing; no more parade about their names than those of the saints themselves. *Our Lady of Help* is called Madame Georges, and our good master plain M. Rodolph."

"Merciful powers! My wife! my judge! my executioner!" faintly exclaimed the robber, struck almost speechless at this unexpected revelation. "Rodolph!—Madame Georges!"

It was wholly impossible for the Schoolmaster to entertain a doubt respecting the identity of the persons to whom those names belonged. Previously to adjudging him his fearful punishment, Rodolph had spoken of the lively interest he took in all that concerned Madame Georges. The recent visit of the Negro David to this farm was another conclusive proof of there being no mistake in the matter. It seemed as though the very hand of Providence had brought about this singular rencontre, overthrowing as it so completely did his recently cherished hopes of emancipation from his present misery, through the intervention of the generosity of the proprietor of this farm. To fly was his first impulse. The very name of Rodolph inspired him with the most intense terror. Possibly he was even now in the house. Scarcely recovered from his first alarm, the brigand rose from the table, and, grasping the hand of Tortillard, exclaimed, in a wild and terrified manner,—

"Let us be gone!—quick!—lead me hence. Let us go, I say."

The whole of the servants looked on with astonishment.

"Go!" said Father Châtelain, with much surprise. "Why? wherefore should you go? What are you thinking about, my friend? Come, what fresh whim is this? Are you quite in your right senses?"

Tortillard cleverly availed himself of this last suggestion, and, uttering a deep sigh, touched his forehead significantly with his forefinger, so as to convey to the minds of the wondering labourers the impression that his pretended parent was not quite right in his head. The signal elicited a corresponding gesture of pity and due comprehension.

"Come, I say, come!" persisted the Schoolmaster, endeavouring to

draw the boy along with him; but, fully determined not to quit such comfortable quarters to wander about in the fields all night during the frost and snow, Tortillard began in a whimpering voice to say,—

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! poor father has got one of his old fits come on again. There, there, father, sit down and keep yourself quiet: pray do, and don't think of wandering out in the cold—it would kill you, maybe. No, not if you are ever so angry with me, will I be so wicked as to lead you out in such weather." Then, addressing himself to the labourers, he said, "Will none of you good gentlemen help me to keep my poor dear father from risking his life by going out to-night?"

"Yes, yes, my boy," answered Father Châtelain; "make yourself perfectly easy. We will not allow your father to quit the place. He shall stay here to-night, in spite of himself."

"Surely you will not keep me here against my will?" inquired the wretched Schoolmaster, in hurried accents; "and perhaps, too, I should offend your master by my presence—that Monsieur Rodolph. You told me the farm was not an hospital; once more, therefore, I ask you to let me go forth in peace on my way."

"Offend our master!—that you would not, I am quite sure. But make yourself easy on that score. I am sorry to say he does not live here, neither do we see him half as frequently as we could wish. But, if even he had been here, your presence would have made no sort of difference to him."

"No, no," persisted the blind man with continued alarm; "I have changed my mind about applying to him. My son is right. No doubt my relation at Louvres will take care of me. I will go there at once."

"All I have got to say," replied Father Châtelain, kindly conceiving that he was speaking to a man whose brain was unhappily affected, "is just this—that to attempt to proceed on your journey with this poor child to-night is wholly out of the question. Come, let me put matters to rights for you, and say no more about it."

Although now reassured of Rodolph's not being at Bouqueval, the terrors of the Schoolmaster were by no means dissipated; and, spite of his frightfully disfigured countenance, he was in momentary dread of being recognised by his wife, who might at any moment enter the kitchen, when he was perfectly persuaded she would instantly denounce and give him into custody; his firm impression having been, from the hour of receiving his horrible punishment from the hands of Rodolph, that it was done to satisfy the hatred and vengeance of Madame Georges. But, unable to quit the farm, the ruffian found himself wholly at the mercy of Tortillard. Resigning himself, therefore, to what was unavoidable, yet anxious to escape from the eyes of his wife, he said to the venerable labourer,—

"Since you kindly assure me my being here will in no way displease either your master or mistress, I will gladly accept your hospitality; but, as I am much fatigued, and must set out again at break of day, I would humbly ask permission to go at once to my bed."

"Oh, yes, to-morrow morning, by all means, and as soon as you like; we are very early people here. And, for fear even that you should again wander from the right road, some one shall conduct you part of the way."

"If you have no objection," said Jean René, addressing Father Châtelain, "I will see the poor man a good step on the road; because Madame Georges said yesterday, I was to take the chaise and go to the lawyer's at Villiers le Bel to fetch a large sum of money she requires of him."

"Go with the poor blind traveller by all means," replied Father Châtelain; "but you must walk, mind. Madame has changed her mind about sending to Villiers le Bel, and, wisely reflecting that it was not worth while to have so large a sum lying useless at the farm, has determined to let it remain with the lawyer till Monday next, which will be the day she requires it."

"Of course, Father Châtelain; mistress knows best. But please to tell me why she should consider it unsafe to have money at the farm. What is she afraid of?"

"Of nothing, my lad. Thank God, there is no occasion for fear! But, for all that, I would much rather have five hundred sacks of corn on the premises than ten bags of crowns. Come," said old Châtelain, addressing himself to the brigand and Tortillard, "come, follow me, friend; and you too, my lad." Then, taking up a small lamp, he conducted his two guests to a chamber on the ground-floor, first traversing a large passage into which several doors opened. Placing the light on a table, the old labourer said to the Schoolmaster, "Here is your lodging, and may God grant you a good and peaceful night's repose, my good friend! As for you, my little man, you are sure to sleep sound and well: it belongs to your happy age to do so."

The Schoolmaster, pensive and meditative, sat down by the side of the bed to which Tortillard conducted him. At the instant when Father Châtelain was quitting the room, Tortillard made him a sign indicative of his desire to speak with him alone, and hastily rejoined him in the passage.

"What is it, my boy, you have to say to me?" inquired the old man kindly.

"Ah, my kind sir, I only wanted to say that my father is frequently seized during the night with most violent convulsion-fits, which require a

much stronger person than I am to hold him; should I be obliged to call for help, is there any person near who could hear me?"

"Poor child!" said the labourer, sympathisingly; "make yourself easy. There,—do you see that door beside the staircase?"

"Oh, yes, good, kind gentleman; I see it."

"Well, one of the farm-labourers sleeps in that room. You will only just have to run to him. He never locks his door; and he will come to your father in an instant."

"Thank you, sir; God bless you! I will remember all your kindness when I say my prayers. But suppose, sir, the man and myself were not strong enough together to manage my poor father when these violent convulsions came on, could you, who look so good, and speak so kind—could you be kind enough to come and tell us what to do?"

"Me, my boy? Oh, I sleep, as well as all the other men-servants, out of the house, in a large outbuilding in the courtyard. But make yourself quite comfortable. Jean René could manage a mad bull, he is so powerful. Besides, if you really wished any further help, he would go and call up our old cook; she sleeps on the first floor, even with our mistress and young mademoiselle: and I can promise you that our old woman is a most excellent sick-nurse, should your father require any one to attend to him when the fit is over."

"Thank you, kind gentleman, a thousand times. Good night, sir. I will go now and pray of God to bless you for your kindness and pity to the poor blind."

"Good night, my lad! Let us hope both you and your father will enjoy a sound night's rest, and have no occasion to require any person's help. You had better return to your room now; your poor father may be wanting you."

"I will, sir. Good night, and thank you!"

"God preserve you both, my child!" And the old man returned to the kitchen.

Scarcely had he turned his back, than the limping rascal made one of those supremely insulting and derisive gestures familiar to all the blackguards of Paris, consisting in slapping the nape of the neck repeatedly with the left hand, darting the right hand quite open continually out in a straight line. With the most consummate audacity, this dangerous child had just gleaned, under the mask of guileless tenderness and apprehension for his father, information most important for the furtherance of the schemes of the Chouette and Schoolmaster. He had ascertained during the last few minutes that the part of the building where he slept was only occupied by Madame Georges, Fleur-de-Marie, an old female servant, and one of the farm-labourers. Upon his return to the room he was to share with the blind man, Tortillard carefully avoided approaching him. The former, however, heard his step, and growled out,—

"Where have you been, you vagabond?"

"What! you want to know, do you, old blind 'un?"

"Oh, I'll make you pay for all you have made me suffer this evening, you wretched urchin!" exclaimed the Schoolmaster, rising furiously, and groping about in every direction after Tortillard, feeling by the walls as a guide. "I'll strangle you when I catch you, you young fiend—you infernal viper!"

"Poor, dear father! How prettily he plays at blindman's buff with his own little boy," said Tortillard, grinning, and enjoying the ease with

which he escaped from the impotent attempts of the Schoolmaster to seize him, who, though impelled to the exertion by his over-boiling rage,

was soon compelled to cease, and, as had been the case before, to give up all hopes of inflicting the revenge he yearned to bestow on the impish son of Bras Rouge.

Thus compelled to submit to the impudent persecution of his juvenile tormentor, and await the propitious hour when all his injuries could safely be avenged, the brigand determined to reserve his powerless wrath for a fitting opportunity of paying off old scores, and, worn out in body by his futile violence, threw himself, swearing and cursing, on the bed.

"Dear father!—sweet father!—have you got the toothach that you swear so? Ah, if Monsieur le Curé heard you, what would he say to you? He would give you such penance! Oh, my!"

"That's right!—go on!" replied the ruffian, in a hollow and suppressed voice, after long enduring this entertaining vivacity on the part of the young gentleman. "Laugh at me!—mock me!—make sport of my calamity, cowardly scoundrel that you are! That is a fine, noble action, is it not? Just worthy of such a mean, ignoble, contemptible soul as dwells within that wretched, crooked body!"

"Oh, how fine we talk! How nice we preach about being generous, and all that, don't we?" cried Tortillard, bursting into peals of laughter. "I beg your pardon, dear father, but I can't possibly help thinking it so funny to hear you, whose fingers were regular fish-hooks, picking and stealing whatever came in their way; and, as for generosity, I beg you don't mention it, because, till you got your eyes poked out, I don't suppose you ever thought of such a word!"

"But, at least, I never did you any harm. Why, then, torment me thus?"

"Because, in the first place, you said what I did not like to the Chouette; then you had a fancy for stopping and playing the fool among the clodhoppers here. Perhaps you mean to commence a course of asses' milk?"

"You impudent young beggar! If I had only had the opportunity of remaining at this farm—which I now wish sunk in the bottomless pit, or blasted with eternal lightning—you should not have played your tricks of devilish cruelty with me any longer!"

"You to remain here! that would be a farce! Who, then, would Madame la Chouette have for her *bête de souffrance?* Me, perhaps, thank ye!—don't you wish you may get it?"

"Miserable abortion!"

"Abortion! ah, yes, another reason why I say, as well as Aunt Chouette, there is nothing so funny as to see you in one of your unaccountable passions—you, who could kill me with one blow of your fist; it's more funny than if you were a poor, weak creature. How very funny you were at supper to-night! *Dieu de Dieu!* what a *lark* I had all to myself! why, it was better than a play at the Gaîté. At every kick I gave you on the sly, your passion made all the blood fly in your face, and your white eyes became red all round; they only wanted a bit of blue in the middle to have been real tricoloured. They would have made two fine cockades for the town-sergeant, would n't they?"

"Come, come, you like to laugh—you are merry: bah! it's natural at your age—it's natural—I'm not angry with you," said the Schoolmaster, in an air of affected carelessness, hoping to propitiate Tortillard; "but, instead of standing there, saying saucy things, it would be much better for you to remember what the Chouette told you: you say you are very fond of her. You should examine all over the place, and get the print of the locks. Didn't you hear them say, they expected to have a large sum of money here on Monday? we will be amongst them then, and have our share. I should have been foolish to have stayed here; I should have had enough of these asses of country-people at the end of a week, shouldn't I, boy?" asked the ruffian, to flatter Tortillard.

"If you had stayed here, I should have been very much annoyed, 'pon my word and honour," replied Bras Rouge's son, in a mocking tone.

"Yes, yes, there's a good business to be done in this house; and, if there should be nothing to steal, yet I will return here with the Chouette, if only to have my revenge," said the miscreant, in a tone full of fury and malice, "for now I am sure it is my wife who excited that infernal Rodolph against me;—he, who in blinding me has put me at the mercy of all the world—of the Chouette, and a young blackguard like yourself. Well, if I cannot avenge myself on him, I will have vengeance against my wife,—yes, she shall pay me for all, even if I set fire to this accursed house, and bury myself in its mouldering ruins. Yes, I will—I will have——"

"You will, you want to get hold of your wife, eh, old gentleman? She is within ten paces of you, that's vexing, ain't it? If I liked, I could lead you to the door of her room, that's what I could, for I know the room.

arising from blood-thirsty revenge and implacable hatred, which in vain sought to satiate itself. The exuberant strength of this monster could only be equalled by the impossibility of satisfying his deadly desires. Let us imagine a hungry, furious, maddened wolf, teazed during a whole day by a child through the bars of his den, and scenting within two paces of him a victim who would at once satisfy his hunger and his rage. At the last taunt of Tortillard the brigand almost lost his senses: unable to reach his victim, he desired in his frenzy to shed his own blood, for his blood was stifling him. One moment he resolved to kill himself, and, had he had a loaded pistol in his hand, he would not have hesitated; he fumbled in his pocket, and drew out a clasp-knife, opened it, and raised it to strike: but, quick as were his movements, reflection, fear, and vital instinct, were still more rapid,—the murderer lacked courage—his arm fell on his knees. Tortillard had watched all his actions with an attentive eye, and, when he saw the finale of this pseudo-tragedy, he continued, mockingly,—

"How, boys, a duel? Ah, pluck the chickens!"

The Schoolmaster, fearing that he should lose his senses if he gave way to an ineffectual burst of fury, turned a deaf ear to this fresh insult of Tortillard, who so impertinently commented on the cowardice of an assassin who recoiled from suicide. Despairing of escape from what he termed, by a sort of avenging fatality, the *cruelty* of his cursed child, the ruffian sought to try what could be done by assailing the avarice of the son of Bras Rouge.

"Ah," said he to him, in a tone almost supplicatory, "lead me to the door of my wife's room, and take any thing you like that's in her room and run away with it! leave me to myself. You may cry out 'murder' if you like; they will apprehend me—kill me on the spot—I care not, I shall die revenged if I have not the courage to end my existence myself. Oh, lead me there—lead me there: depend on it she has gold, jewels, any thing,

and you may take all, all for yourself, for your own, do you mind?—your own; only lead me to the door where she is."

"Yes, I mind well enough: you want me to lead you to her door, then to her bed, and then to tell you when to strike, then to guide your hand—eh! that's it, ain't it? You want to make me a handle to your knife, old monster!" replied Tortillard, with an expression of contempt, anger, and horror, which, for the first time in his life, gave an appearance of seriousness to his weasel face, usually all impertinence and insolence; "I'll be killed first, I tell you, sooner than I'll lead you to where your wife is!"

"You refuse?"

The son of Bras Rouge made no reply. He approached with bare feet and without being heard by the Schoolmaster, who, seated on the bed, still held his large knife in his hand, and then, in a moment, with marvellous quickness and dexterity, Tortillard snatched from him his weapon, and with one jump skipped to the further end of the chamber.

"My knife! my knife!" cried the brigand, extending his arms.

"No; for then you might to-morrow morning ask to speak with your wife and try to kill her, since, as you say, you have had enough of life, and are such a coward that you don't dare kill yourself."

"How he defends my wife against me!" said the bandit, whose intellect became obscured; "This little wretch is a devil! Where am I? why does he try to save her?"

"Because I like it," said Tortillard, whose face resumed its usual appearance of sly impudence.

"Ah, is that it?" murmured the Schoolmaster, whose mind was wandering; "well, then, I'll fire the house! will all burn—all! I prefer that furnace to the other. The candle! the candle!"

"Ah! ah! ah!" exclaimed Tortillard, bursting out again into loud laughter. "If your own candle—your 'peepers'—had not been snuffed out, and for ever, you would have known that ours had been extinguished an hour ago." And Tortillard sang,—

"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu."

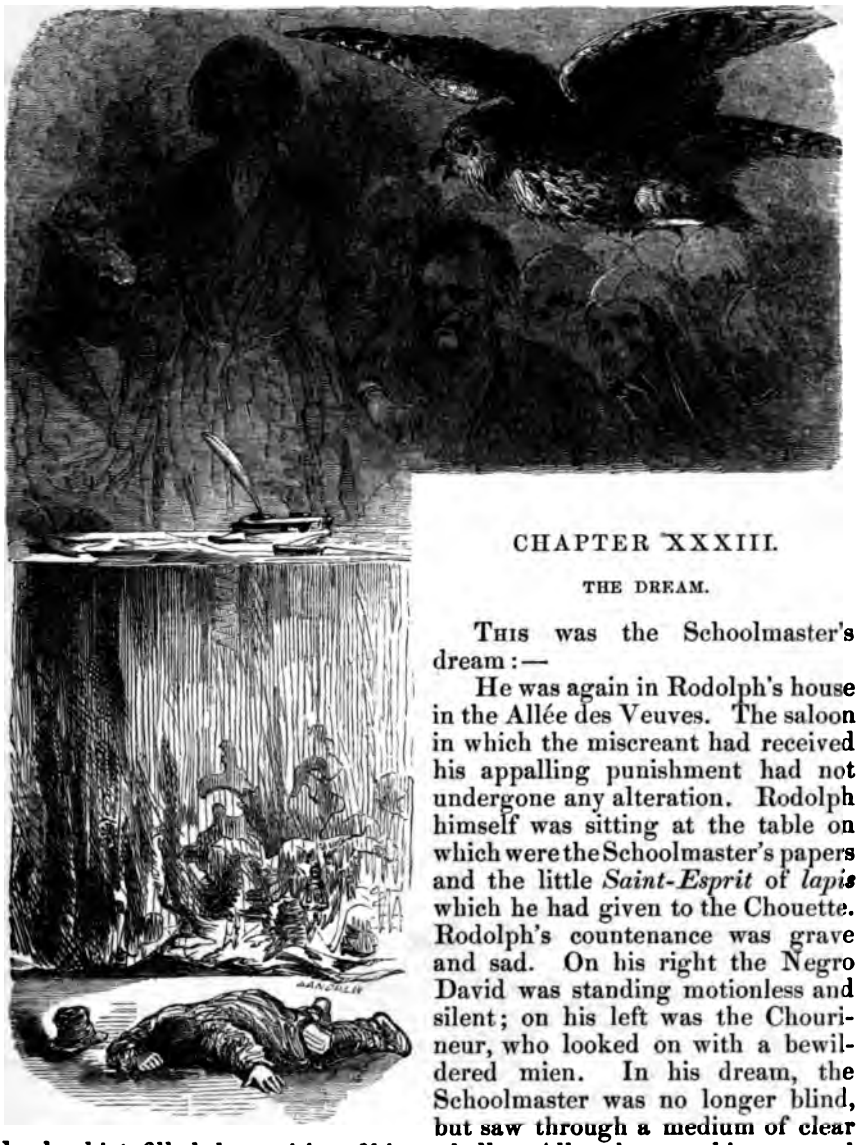
The Schoolmaster gave a deep groan, stretched out his arms, and fell heavily on the floor, his face on the ground, and, struck by a rush of blood, remained motionless.

"Not to be caught, old boy," said Tortillard; "that's only a trick to make me come to you, that you may serve me out! When you have been long enough on the floor, you'll get up."

Bras Rouge's boy resolved not to go to sleep, for fear of being surprised by the Schoolmaster; so seated himself in a chair, with his eyes fixed on the ruffian, persuaded that it was a trap laid for him, and not believing the Schoolmaster in any danger. That he might employ himself agreeably, Tortillard drew silently and carefully from his pocket a little red silk purse, and counted slowly, and with looks of joy and avarice, the seventeen pieces of gold which it contained. Tortillard had acquired his ill-gotten riches thus:—It may be remembered that Madame d'Harville was nearly surprised by her husband at the rendezvous which she had granted to the commandant. Rodolph, when he had given the purse

to the young lady, had told her to go up to the fifth story to the Morels, under the pretence of bringing them assistance. Madame d'Harville ran quickly up the staircase, holding the purse in her hands, when Tortillard, who was coming from the quack's, caught a glimpse of the purse, and, pretending to stumble as he passed the marquise, pushed against her, and, in the shock, slily stole the purse. Madame d'Harville, bewildered, and hearing her husband's footsteps, hurried on to the fifth story, without thinking or complaining of the impudent robbery of the little cripple. After having counted and recounted his gold, Tortillard cast his eyes towards the Schoolmaster, who was extended still on the ground. Disquieted for a moment, he listened, and, hearing the robber breathe freely, he thought that he was still meditating some trick against him.

Chance saved the Schoolmaster from a congestion of the brain, which else must have proved mortal. His fall had caused a salutary and abundant bleeding at the nose. He then fell into a kind of feverish torpor — half sleep, half delirium, and then had this wild, this fearful dream!



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DREAM.

This was the Schoolmaster's dream:—

He was again in Rodolph's house in the Allée des Veuves. The saloon in which the miscreant had received his appalling punishment had not undergone any alteration. Rodolph himself was sitting at the table on which were the Schoolmaster's papers and the little *Saint-Esprit* of *lapis* which he had given to the Chouette. Rodolph's countenance was grave and sad. On his right the Negro David was standing motionless and silent; on his left was the Chourineur, who looked on with a bewildered mien. In his dream, the Schoolmaster was no longer blind, but saw through a medium of clear blood, which filled the cavities of his eyeballs. All and every thing seemed to him tinted with red. As birds of prey hover on motionless wing above the head of the victim which they fascinate before they devour, so a monstrous screech-owl (*chouette*), having for its head the hideous visage of the one-eyed hag, soared over the Schoolmaster, keeping fixed on him her round, glaring, and green eye. This fixed stare was upon his breast like a heavy weight. The Schoolmaster discerned a vast lake of blood separating him from the table at which Rodolph was seated. Then his inflexible judge, as well as the Chourineur and the Negro, grew and grew, expanding into colossal proportions, until they touched the ceiling; and then it also became higher in proportion. The lake of blood was calm, and as unruffled as a red mirror: the Schoolmaster saw his hideous countenance reflected

therein. Then that was suddenly effaced by the tumult of the swelling waves. From their troubled surface there arose a vapour resembling the foul exhalation of a marsh, a livid-coloured mist of that violet hue peculiar to the lips of the dead. In proportion as this miasma rises—rises, the faces of Rodolph, the Chourineur, and the Negro, continue to expand and expand in an extraordinary manner, and always remain above this fearful cloud. In the midst of the awful vapour, the Schoolmaster sees the pale ghosts, and those murderous scenes in which he had been the actor. In this fantastic mirage he first sees a little bald-headed old man, clad in a long brown coat, and wearing an eye-shade of green silk. He is employing himself in a dilapidated chamber in counting and arranging pieces of gold into piles by the light of a lamp. Through the window, lighted by the dim moonlight reflected on the tops of some high trees waving in the wind, the Schoolmaster recognises his own figure. Pressing his distorted features against the glass, following every motion of the old man with glaring eyes, then breaking a pane, he opens the window itself, leaps with a bound upon his victim, and stabs him between the shoulders with

his long and keen knife. The movement is so rapid, the blow so quick and sure, that the dead body of the old man remains seated in the chair.

The murderer tries to withdraw his weapon from the dead body—he cannot! He redoubles his efforts—in vain! He then seeks to quit the deadly steel—impossible!

The hand of the assassin clings to the handle of the poignard, as the blade of the poignard clings to the frame of the wounded man. The murderer then hears the sound of clinking spurs and clashing swords in the adjoining room. He must escape at all risks, and attempts to carry with him the body of the feeble old man, from which he cannot withdraw either his weapon or his hand.

He cannot do even this. The light and feeble carcass weighs him down like a mass of lead. Despite his herculean shoulders, his desperate efforts, the Schoolmaster cannot even stir this overwhelming weight.

The sound of echoing steps and jingling sabres comes nearer and nearer. The key turns in the lock—the door opens. The vision disappears.

And then the screech-owl flaps her wings, and shrieks out,—

"IT IS THE OLD MISER OF THE RUE DE LA ROULE. YOUR MAIDEN MURDER—MURDER—MURDER!"

A moment's darkness—then the miasma which covers the lake of blood resumes its transparency, and another spectre is revealed.

The day begins to dawn—the fog is thick and heavy. A man, clothed like a cattle-dealer, lies stretched dead on the bank of the highroad. The trampled earth, the torn turf, prove that the victim has made a desperate resistance. The man has five bleeding wounds in his breast. He is lifeless; yet still he seems to whistle on his dogs, calling to them, "*Help!—help!*"

But his whistling, his cries, proceed from five large and gaping wounds,

"Each one a death in nature,"

which move like so many complaining lips. The five calls, the five whistlings, all made and heard at once, come from the dead man by the *mouths* of his gushing wounds; and fearful are they to hear!

At this instant the Chouette waves her wings, and mocks the deathly groans of the victim with five bursts of laughter—a laughter as unearthly and as horrible as the madman's mirth; and then again she shrieks,—

"THE CATTLE-DEALER OF POISSY. MURDER!—MURDER!—MURDER!"

Protracted and underground echoes first repeat aloud the malevolent laughter of the screech-owl. Then they seem to die away in the very bowels of the earth.

At this sound two large dogs, as black as midnight, with eyes glaring like burning coals, begin to run rapidly around—around—around the Schoolmaster, baying furiously. They almost touch him, and yet their bark appears as distant as if carried on the wind of the morning.

Gradually these spectres fade away as the previous one did, and are lost in the pale vapour which is continually ascending.

A new exhalation now arises from the lake of blood, and spreads itself on its surface. It is a sort of greenish, transparent mist; it resembles the vertical section of a canal filled with water. At first he sees the bed of

the canal covered in by a thick vase formed of numberless reptiles usually imperceptible to the unassisted eye, but which, enlarged, as if viewed through a microscope, assume monstrous forms, vast proportions relatively to their actual size. It is no longer mud, but a compact, living, crawling mass—an inextricable conglomeration which wriggles and curls; so close, so dense, that a sullen and slow undulation hardly stirs the level of this vase, or rather bed of foulest animalculæ. Above trickles gently—gently, a turbid stream, thick and stagnating, which, in its dilatory flow, disturbs the filth incessantly vomited by the sewers of a great city—fragments of all sorts, carcasses of animals, &c. &c. Suddenly the Schoolmaster hears the plash of a body, which falls heavily on the water; in its recoil the water sprinkles his very face. In the midst of the air-bubbles which rise thick and fast to the surface of the canal, he sees the body of a woman, which sinks rapidly as she struggles—struggles.

Then he sees himself and the Chouette running hastily along the banks of St. Martin's Canal, carrying with them a box covered with black cloth; and yet he is still present during all the variations of agony suffered by the victim whom he and the Chouette have thrown into the canal. After the first immersion, the victim rises to the surface and moves her arms in violent agitation, like some one who, not knowing how to swim, tries in vain to save herself. Then she utters a piercing cry—a cry of one in the last extremity—despairing—which ends in the sullen, stifled sound of involuntary choking; and the woman the second time sinks beneath the troubled waters.

The screech-owl, which hovers continually motionless, imitates the convulsive rattle of the drowning wretch, as she mocked the dying groans of the cattle-dealer. In the midst of bursts of deathlike laughter, the screech-owl utters,—

"*Glou!—glou!—glou!*"

The subterranean echoes repeat the sounds.

A second time submerged, the woman is fast suffocating, and makes one more desperate effort for breath; but, instead of air, it is water which she inspires. Then her head falls back, her convulsed features are swollen and become livid, her neck becomes blue and tumefied, her arms stiffen, and, in a last spasmodic effort, the drowning woman in her agony moves her feet, which are resting on the vase. Then she is surrounded by a mass of black soil, which ascends with her to the surface of the water. Scarcely has the choked wretch breathed her last sigh, than she is covered with myriads of the microscopic reptiles—the greedy and horrible vermin of the mud. The carcass floats for a moment, balances for a moment, and then sinks slowly, horizontally, the feet lower than the head, and between the double waters begins to follow the current of the land. Sometimes the dead corse turns, and its pale face is before the Schoolmaster. Then the spectre fixes on him glaringly its two blue, glassy, and opaque eyes; the livid mouth opens. The Schoolmaster is far away from the drowned woman, and yet her lips murmur in his ears, "*Glou! glou! glou!*" accompanying these appalling syllables with that singular noise which a bottle thrust into water makes when filling itself.

The screech-owl repeats, "*Glou! glou! glou!*" flapping her wings, and shrieking,—

"THE WOMAN OF THE CANAL ST. MARTIN! MURDER!—MURDER!—MURDER!"

The vision of the drowned woman disappears. The lake of blood, through which the Schoolmaster still constantly beholds Rodolph, becomes of a bronzed, black colour, then red again, and then changes instantaneously into a liquid furnace-like molten metal. Then that lake of fire rises—rises—rises towards the sky like an immense whirlpool. There is now a fiery horizon like iron at a white heat. This immense, boundless horizon dazzles and scorches the very eyes of the Schoolmaster, who, fascinated, fastened to the spot, cannot turn away his gaze. Then, at the bottom of this burning lava, whose reflection seems to consume him, he sees pass and repass, one by one, the black and giant spectres of his victims.

"THE MAGIC-LANTHORN OF REMORSE!—REMORSE!—REMORSE!" shrieks the night-bird, flapping her hideous wings, and laughing mockingly.

Notwithstanding the intolerable anguish which his impatient gaze creates, the Schoolmaster has his eyes fixed on the grisly phantoms which move in the blazing sheet. Then an indefinable horror steals over him. Passing through every step of indescribable torture, by dint of contemplating this blazing sight, he feels his eyeballs—which have replaced the blood with which his orbits were filled at the commencement of his dream—he feels his eyeballs grow hot, burning, and melt in this furnace—to smoke and bubble—and at last become calcined in their cavities like two crucibles filled with red fire. By a fearful power, after having *seen* as well as felt the successive transformations of his eyeballs into ashes, he falls into the darkness of his actual blindness.

But now, suddenly, his intolerable agonies are assuaged as though by enchantment. An odorous air of delicious freshness passes over his burning eyeballs. This air is a lovely admixture of the scents of spring-time, which exhale from flowers bathed in evening dew. The School-

master hears all about him a gentle murmur, like that of the breeze which just stirs the leaves—like that of a brook of running waters, which rushes and murmurs on its bed of stone and moss, "in the leafy month of June." Thousands of birds warble the most enchanting melodies. They are stilled; and the voices of children, of angelic tone, sing strange, unknown words—words that are "winged" (if we may use the expression), and which the Schoolmaster hears mount to heaven with gentle motion. A feeling of moral health, of tranquillity, of undefined languor, creeps over him by degrees. It is an expansion of the heart, an elevation of the mind, an effort of the soul, of which no physical feeling, how delicious soever it may be, can impart the least idea. He feels himself softly soaring in a heavenly sphere: he seems to rise to an immeasurable height.

* * * * * *

After having for some moments revelled in this unspeakable felicity, he again finds himself in the dark abyss of his habitual thoughts. His dream continues; but he is again but the muzzled miscreant who blasphemes and curses in the paroxysm of his impotent rage. A voice is heard—sonorous—solemn! It is Rodolph's! The Schoolmaster starts, "like a guilty thing upon a fearful summons." He has the vague consciousness of a dream; but the alarm with which Rodolph inspires him is so great, that he tries, but vainly, to escape from this fresh vision. The voice speaks—he listens! The tone of Rodolph is not severe; it is "rather in sorrow than in anger."

"Unhappy man," he says to the Schoolmaster, "the hour of your repentance has not yet sounded. God only knows when it will strike. The punishment of your crimes is still incomplete: you have suffered, but not expiated. Destiny follows out its work of full justice. Your accomplices have become your tormentors. A woman, a child, tame—subdue—conquer you. When I sentenced you to a terrible punishment for your crimes, I said—do you remember my words?—'*You have wickedly abused the great bodily strength bestowed upon you: I will paralyse that strength. The strongest have trembled before you: I will make you henceforward shrink in the presence of the weakest of beings.*' You have left the obscure retreat in which you might have dwelt for repentance and expiation. You were afraid of silence and solitude. You sought to drown remembrance by new crimes. Just now, in a fearful and blood-thirsty access of passion, you have wished to kill your wife. She is here under the same roof as yourself. She sleeps without defence. You have a knife; her apartment is close at hand. There was nothing to prevent you from reaching her; nothing could have protected her from your rage—nothing but your impotence. The dream you have had, and in which you are still bound, may teach you much—may save you. The mysterious phantoms of this dream bear with them a most pregnant meaning. The lake of blood, in which your victims have appeared, is the blood you have shed. The molten lava which replaced it is the gnawing, eating remorse, which must consume you before one day, that the Almighty, having mercy on your protracted tortures, shall call you to Himself, and let you taste the ineffable sweetness of His gracious forgiveness. But this will not be! No, no!—these warnings will be useless.

Far from repenting, you regret every day, with horrid blasphemies, the time when you could commit such atrocities. Alas! from this continual struggle between your blood-thirsty desires and the impossibility of satisfying them — between your habits of fierce oppression and the compulsion of submitting to beings as weak as they are depraved, there will result to you a fate so fearful — so appalling. Ah, unhappy wretch!"

Rodolph's voice faltered, and for a moment he was silent, as if emotion and horror had hindered him from proceeding. The Schoolmaster's hair bristled on his brow. What could be — would be — that fate, which even his executioner pitied?

"The fate that awaits you is so horrible," resumed Rodolph, "that, if the Almighty, in His inexorable and all-powerful vengeance, would make you in your person expiate all the crimes of all mankind, He could not devise a more fearful punishment! Ah, woe for you! — woe for you!"

At this moment the Schoolmaster uttered a piercing shriek, and awoke with a bound at this horrid, frightful dream.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER.

THE hour of nine had struck on the Bouqueval clock, when Madame Georges softly entered the chamber of Fleur-de-Marie. The light slumber of the young girl was quickly broken, and she awoke to find her kind friend standing by her bedside. A brilliant winter's sun darted its rays through the blinds and chintz window-curtains, the pink linings of which cast a bright glow on the pale countenance of La Goualeuse, giving it the look of health it so greatly needed.

"Well, my child," said Madame Georges, sitting down and gently kissing her forehead, "how are you this morning?"

"Much better, madame, I thank you."

"I hope you were not awoke very early this morning?"

"No, indeed, madame."

"I am glad of it: the blind man and his son, who were permitted to sleep here last night, insisted upon quitting the farm immediately it was light, and I was fearful that the noise made in opening the gates might have woke you."

"Poor things! why did they go so very early?"

"I know not. After you became more calm and comfortable last

night I went down into the kitchen, for the purpose of seeing them, but they had pleaded extreme weariness, and begged permission to retire. Father Châtelain tells me the blind man does not seem very right in his head; and the whole body of servants were unanimous in praising the tenderness and care with which the boy attended upon his blind parent. But now, my dear Marie, listen to me: you must not expose yourself to the risk of taking fresh cold after the attack of fever you suffered from last night, and, therefore, I recommend your keeping quite quiet all day, and not leaving the parlour at all."

"Nay, madame, I have promised M. le Curé to be at the Rectory at five o'clock; pray allow me to go, as I am expected."

"Indeed I cannot, it would be very imprudent; I can perceive you have passed a very bad night, your eyes are quite heavy."

"I have not been able to rest, through the most frightful dreams which pursued me whenever I tried to sleep. I fancied myself in the power of a wicked woman who used to torment me most cruelly when I was a child; and I kept starting up in dread and alarm. I am ashamed of such silly weakness as to allow dreams to frighten me, but, indeed, I suffered so much during the night that when I awoke my pillow was wetted with my tears."

"I am truly sorry for this weakness, as you justly style it, my dear child," said Madame Georges, with affectionate concern, seeing the eyes of Fleur-de-Marie again filling fast, "because I perceive the pain it occasions you."

The poor girl, overpowered by her feelings, threw her arms round the neck of her adopted mother and buried her sobs in her bosom.

"Marie—Marie! my child, you terrify me: why—why is this?"

"Pardon me, dear madame, I beseech you! Indeed I know not myself what has come over me, but for the last two days my heart has seemed full almost to bursting. I cannot restrain my tears, though I know not wherefore I weep. A fearful dread of some great evil about to befall me weighs down my spirits and resists every attempt to shake it off."

"Come! come! I shall scold you in earnest if you thus give way to imaginary terrors."

At this moment Claudine, whose previous tap at the door had been unheard, entered the room.

"What is it, Claudine?"

"Madame, Pierre has just arrived from Arnouville, in Madame Dubreuil's chaise: he brings a letter for you, which he says is of great importance."

Madame Georges took the paper from Claudine's hand, opened it, and read as follows:—

"My dear Madame Georges,

"You could do me a considerable favour, and assist me under very perplexing circumstances, by hastening to the farm here without delay. Pierre has orders to wait till you are ready, and will drive you back after dinner. I really am in such confusion that I hardly know what I am about. M. Dubreuil has gone to the wool-fair at Pontoise; I have, therefore, no one to turn to for advice and assistance but you and Marie. Clara

sends her best love to her very dear adopted sister, and anxiously expects her arrival. Try to be with us by eleven o'clock, to luncheon.

" Ever yours most sincerely,

" F. DUBREUIL."

" What can possibly be the matter?" asked Madame Georges of Fleur-de-Marie; " fortunately the tone of Madame Dubreuil's letter is not calculated to cause alarm.

" Do you wish me to accompany you, madame?" asked the Goualeuse.

" Why that would scarcely be prudent, so cold as it is. But, upon second thoughts," continued Madame Georges, " I think you may venture if you wrap yourself up very warm; it will serve to raise your spirits, and possibly the short ride may do you good."

The Goualeuse did not immediately reply, but, after a few minutes' consideration, she ventured to say,—

" But, madame, M. le Curé expects me this evening, at five o'clock, at the Rectory."

" But I promise you to be back in good time for you to keep your engagement: now will you go?"

" Oh, thank you, madame! Indeed, I shall be so delighted to see Mademoiselle Clara."

" What! again?" uttered Madame Georges, in a tone of gentle reproach. " MADEMOISELLE Clara? She does not speak so distantly to you when she addresses you."

" Oh, no, madame!" replied the poor girl, casting down her eyes, while a bright flush rose even to her temples; " but there is so great a difference between us that ——"

" Dear Marie! you are cruel and unkind thus needlessly to torment yourself. Have you so soon forgotten how I chided you but just now for the very same fault? There, drive away all such foolish thoughts! dress yourself as quickly as you can, and pray wrap up very carefully. If we are quick, we may reach Arnouville before eleven o'clock."

Then, leaving Fleur-de-Marie to perform the duties of her simple toilette, Madame Georges retired to her own chamber, first dismissing Claudine with an intimation to Pierre that herself and niece would be ready to start almost immediately.

Half-an-hour afterwards, Madame Georges and Marie were on their way to Arnouville in one of those large, roomy cabriolets in use among the rich farmers in the environs of Paris; and briskly did their comfortable vehicle, drawn by a stout Norman horse, roll over the grassy road which led from Bouqueval to Arnouville. The extensive buildings and numerous appendages to the farm tenanted by M. Dubreuil in the latter village bore testimony to the wealth and importance of the property bestowed as a marriage-portion on Mademoiselle Césarine de Noirmont upon her union with the Duke de Lucenay.

The loud crack of Pierre's whip apprised Madame Dubreuil of the arrival of her friend Madame Georges with Fleur-de-Marie, who were most affectionately greeted by Clara and her mother. Madame Dubreuil was a good-looking woman of middle age, with a countenance expressive

of extreme gentleness and kindness; while her daughter Clara was a handsome brunette, with rich hazel eyes, and a happy, innocent expression

Madame Dubreuil and Clara.

for ever resting on her full rosy lips, which seemed never to open but to utter words of sweetness and amiability. As Clara eagerly threw her arms round her friend's neck as she descended the vehicle, the Goualeuse saw with extreme surprise that the kind-hearted girl had laid aside her more fashionable attire and was habited as a simple country-maiden.

"Why, Clara!" said Madame Georges, affectionately returning her embrace, "what is the meaning of this strange costume?"

"It is done in imitation and admiration of her sister Marie," answered Madame Dubreuil; "I assure you she let me have no peace till I had procured her a woollen bodice and a fustian skirt exactly resembling your Marie's. But, now we are talking of whims and caprices, just come this

way with me," added Madame Dubreuil, drawing a deep sigh, "while I explain to you my present difficulty, as well as the cause of my so abruptly summoning you hither; but you are so kind, I feel assured you will not only forgive it, but also render me all the assistance I require."

Following Madame Georges and her mother to their sitting-room, Clara lovingly conducted the Goualeuse also thither, placing her in the warmest corner of the fireside, and tenderly chafing her hands to prevent the cold from affecting her; then fondly caressing her, and styling her again and again her very dear sister Marie, she playfully reproached her for allowing so long an interval to pass away without paying her a visit. After the recent conversation which passed between the poor Goualeuse and the curé (no doubt fresh in the reader's memory), it will easily be believed that these tender marks of affection inspired the unfortunate girl with feelings of deep humility, combined with a timid joy.

"Now, then, dear Madame Dubreuil," said Madame Georges, when they were comfortably seated, "do pray tell me what has happened, and in what manner I can be serviceable to you."

"Oh, in several ways! I will tell you exactly how: in the first place, I believe you are not aware that this farm is the private property of the Duchesse de Lucenay, and that we are accountable to her alone, having nothing whatever to do with the duke or his steward."

"No, indeed, I never heard that before."

"Neither should I have troubled you with so unimportant a matter now, but that it forms a necessary part of the explanation I am about to give you of my present pressing need of your kind services. You must know, then, that we consider ourselves as the tenants of Madame de Lucenay, and always pay our rent either to herself or to Madame Simon her head *femme de chambre*; and really, spite of some little impetuosity of temper, Madame la Duchesse is so amiable, that it is delightful to have business with her. Dubreuil and I would go through fire and water to serve her: but, la! that is only natural, considering we have known her from her very cradle, and were accustomed to see her playing about as a child during the visits she used annually to pay to the estate during the lifetime of her late father, the Prince de Noirmont. Latterly she has asked for her rent in advance: forty thousand francs is not 'picked up by the roadside,' as the old proverb says; but happily we had laid that sum by as Clara's dowry; and the very next morning after the request reached us we carried madame her money in bright, shining, golden louis. These great ladies spend so much, you see, in luxuries, such as you and I have no idea of. Yet it is only within the last twelvemonth Madame de Lucenay has wished to be paid beforehand, she used always to seem as though she had plenty of money; but things are very different now."

"Still, my dear Madame Dubreuil, I do not yet perceive in what way I can possibly assist you."

"Don't be in a hurry! I am just coming to that part of my story; but I was obliged to tell you all this that you might be able to understand the entire confidence M. la Duchesse places in us: to be sure, she shewed her great regard for us by becoming, when only thirteen years of age, Clara's godmother, her noble father standing as the other sponsor; and, ever since, Madame de Lucenay has loaded her godchild with presents

and kind attentions. But I must not keep you—I see you are impatient; so I will at once proceed with the business part of my tale. You must know, then, that last night I received by express the following letter from Madame de Lucenay:—

"'My dear Madame Dubreuil,

"'You must prepare the small pavilion in the orchard for occupation by to-morrow evening. Send there all the requisite furniture, such as carpets, curtains, &c. &c. Let nothing be wanted to render it, in every respect, as *comfortable* as possible.'

"Do you mark the word *comfortable*, Madame Georges?" inquired Madame Dubreuil, pausing in the midst of her reading; "it is even underlined." Then looking up at her friend with a thoughtful, puzzled expression of countenance, and receiving no answer, she continued the perusal of her letter:—

"'It is so long since the pavilion has been used that it will require large and constant fires both night and day to remove the dampness from the walls. I wish you to behave in every respect to the person who will occupy the apartments as you would do to myself. And you will receive by the hands of the new visitant a letter from me explanatory of all I expect from your well-known zeal and attachment. I depend entirely on you, and feel every assurance that I may safely reckon on your fidelity and desire to serve me. Adieu, my dear Madame Dubreuil: remember me most kindly to my pretty goddaughter; and believe me ever,

"'Yours, sincerely and truly,

"'Noirmont de Lucenay.

"'P.S. The person whom I so strongly recommend to your best care and attention will arrive the day after to-morrow, about dusk. Pray do your very utmost to render the pavilion as *comfortable* as you possibly can.

"*Comfortable* again, you see, and underlined as before," said Madame Dubreuil, returning the letter of Madame de Lucenay to her pocket.

"Well," replied Madame Georges, "all this is simple enough!"

"How do you mean, simple enough? you cannot have heard me read the letter. Madame la Duchesse wishes particularly 'that the pavilion should be rendered as *comfortable* as possible.' Now that is the very reason of my asking you to come to me to-day; Clara and I have been knocking our heads together in vain to discover what *comfortable* can possibly mean, but without being able to find it out. Yet it seems odd, too, that Clara should not know its meaning, for she was several years at school at Villiers le Bel, and gained a quantity of prizes for history and geography; however, she knows as little as I do about that outlandish word. I dare say it is only known at court, or in the fashionable world. However, be that as it may, Madame la Duchesse has thrown me into a pretty fuss by making use of it; she says, and you see twice repeats the words, and even underlines it, 'that she requests I will furnish the pavilion as *comfortably* as possible.' Now what are we to do when we have not the slightest notion of the meaning of that word?"

"Well, Heaven be praised, then, that I can relieve your perplexity by solving this grand mystery!" said Madame Georges, smiling. "Upon the present occasion the word *comfortable* merely means an assemblage of neat, well-chosen, well-arranged, and convenient furniture, so placed, in apartments well warmed and protected from cold or damp, that the occupant shall find every thing that is necessary combined with articles that to some might seem superfluities."

"Thank you: I perfectly understand what *comfortable* means as regards furnishing apartments; but your explanation only increases my difficulties."

"How so?"

"Madame la Duchesse speaks of carpets, furniture, and many *et-cæteras;* now we have no carpets here, and our furniture is of the most homely description. Neither can I make out by the letter whether the person I am to expect is a male or female; and yet every thing must be prepared by to-morrow evening. What shall I do? What can I do? I can get nothing here. Really, Madame Georges, it is enough to drive one wild to be placed in such an awkward situation."

"But, mother," said Clara, "suppose you take the furniture out of my room, and whilst you are refurnishing it I will go and pass a few days with dear Marie at Bouqueval."

"My dear child, what nonsense you talk! as if the humble fittings-up of your chamber could equal what Madame la Duchesse means by the word *comfortable,*" returned Madame Dubreuil, with a disconsolate shrug of the shoulders. "Lord! Lord! why will fine ladies puzzle poor folks like me by going out of their way to find such expressions as *comfortable?*"

"Then I presume the pavilion in question is ordinarily uninhabited?" said Madame Georges.

"Oh, yes! There, you see that small white building at the end of the orchard—that is it. The late Prince de Noirmont, father of Madame la Duchesse, caused it to be built for his daughter when, in her youthful days, she was accustomed to visit the farm, and she then occupied it. There are three pretty chambers in it, and a beautiful little Swiss dairy at the end of the garden, where, in her childish days, Madame la Duchesse used to divert herself with feigning to manage. Since her marriage, she has only been twice at the farm, but each time she passed several hours in the pavilion. The first time was about six years ago, and then she came on horseback with——" Then, as though the presence of Clara and Fleur-de-Marie prevented her from saying more, Madame Dubreuil interrupted herself by saying, "But I am talking instead of doing; and that is not the way to get out of my present difficulty. Come, dear, good Madame Georges, and help a poor bewildered creature like myself!"

"In the first place," answered Madame Georges, "tell me how is this pavilion furnished at the present moment."

"Oh, scarcely at all! In the principal apartment there is a straw matting on the centre of the floor; a sofa, and a few arm-chairs composed of rushes, a table, and some chairs, comprise all the inventory, which, I think you will allow, falls far short of the word *comfortable.*"

"Well, I tell you what I should do in your place. Let me see; it is eleven o'clock. I should send a person on whom you can depend to Paris."

"Our *overseer!** There cannot be a more active, intelligent person."

"Exactly! just the right sort of messenger. Well, in two hours, at the utmost, he may be in Paris. Let him go to some upholsterer in the Chaussée d'Antin—never mind which—and give him the list I will draw out, after I have seen what is wanting for the pavilion; and let him be directed to say that, let the expense be what it may——"

"I don't care about expense, if I can but satisfy the duchess."

"The upholsterer, then, must be told that, at any cost, he must see that every article named in the list be sent here either this evening or

* A species of overseer employed in most of the large farming establishments in the environs of Paris.

before daybreak to-morrow, with three or four of his most clever and active workmen to arrange them as quickly as possible."

"They might come by the Gonesse diligence, which leaves Paris at eight o'clock every evening."

"And as they would only have to place the furniture, lay down carpets, and put up curtains, all that could easily be done by to-morrow evening."

"Oh, my dear Madame Georges, what a load you have taken off my mind! I should never have thought of this simple yet proper manner of proceeding. You are the saving of me! Now, may I ask you to be so kind as draw me out the list of articles necessary to render the pavilion —— What is that hard word? I never can recollect it."

"Comfortable! Yes, I will at once set about it, and with pleasure."

"Dear me! here is another difficulty. Don't you see, we are not told whether to expect a lady or a gentleman? Madame de Lucenay, in her letter, only says '*a person.*' It is very perplexing, is n't it?"

"Then make your preparations as if for a lady, my dear Madame Dubreuil; and, should it turn out a gentleman, why he will only have better reason to be pleased with his accommodations."

"Quite right;—right again, as you always are."

A servant here announced that breakfast was ready.

"Let breakfast wait a little," said Madame Georges. "And, while I draw out the necessary list, send some person you can depend upon to take the exact height and width of the three rooms, that the curtains and carpets may more easily be prepared."

"Thank you. I will set our *overseer* to work out this commission."

"Madame," continued the servant, speaking to her mistress, "the new dairy-woman from Stains is here, with her few goods in a small cart drawn by a donkey. The beast has not a heavy load to complain of, for the poor body's luggage seems but very trifling."

"Poor woman!" said Madame Dubreuil, kindly.

"What woman is it?" inquired Madame Georges.

"A poor creature from Stains, who once had four cows of her own, and used to go every morning to Paris to sell her milk. Her husband was a blacksmith, and one day accompanied her to Paris to purchase some iron he required for his work, agreeing to rejoin her at the corner of the street where she was accustomed to sell her milk. Unhappily, as it afterwards turned out, the poor woman had selected a very bad part of Paris; for, when her husband returned, he found her in the midst of a set of wicked, drunken fellows, who had, for mere mischief's sake, upset all her milk into the gutter. The poor blacksmith tried to reason with them upon the score of their unfair conduct, but that only made matters worse; they all fell on the husband, who sought in vain to defend himself from their violence. The end of the story is, that, in the scuffle which ensued, the man received a stab with a knife, which stretched him a corpse before the eyes of his distracted wife."

"Dreadful, indeed!" ejaculated Madame Georges. "But, at least, the murderer was apprehended?"

"Alas, no! He managed to make his escape during the confusion which ensued, though the unfortunate widow asserts she should recognise him at any minute she might meet him, having repeatedly seen him in company with his associates, inhabitants of that neighbourhood. However, up to the present hour all attempts to discover him have been useless. But, to end my tale, I must tell you that, in consequence of the death of her husband, the poor widow was compelled, in order to pay various debts he had contracted, to sell, not only her cows, but some little land he possessed. The bailiff of the château at Stains recommended the poor creature to me as a most excellent and honest woman, as deserving as she was unfortunate, having three children to provide for, the eldest not yet twelve years of age. I happened, just then, to be in want of a first-rate dairy-woman, therefore offered her the place, which she gladly accepted, and she has now come to take up her abode on the farm."

"This act of real kindness on your part, my dear Madame Dubreuil, does not surprise me, knowing you as well as I do."

"Here, Clara," said Madame Dubreuil, as though seeking to escape from the praises of her friend, "will you go and shew this good woman the way to the lodge she is to occupy, while I hasten to explain to our *overseer* the necessity for his immediate departure for Paris?"

"Willingly, dear mother! Marie can come with me, can she not?"

"Of course," answered Madame Dubreuil, "if she pleases." Then added smilingly, "I wonder whether you two girls could do one without the other?"

"And now," said Madame Georges, seating herself before a table, "I will at once begin my part of the business, that no time may be lost; for we must positively return to Bouqueval at four o'clock."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Madame Dubreuil; "how early! Why, what makes you in such a hurry?"

"Marie is obliged to be at the rectory by five o'clock."

"Oh, if her return relates to that good Abbé Laporte, I am sure it is a sacred duty, with which I would not interfere for the world. Well, then, I will go and give the necessary orders for every thing being punctual to that hour. Those two girls have so much to say to each other, that we must give them as much time as we can."

"Then we shall leave you at three o'clock, my dear Madame Dubreuil?"

"Yes; I promise not to detain you, since you so positively wish it. But pray let me thank you again and again for coming. What a good thing it was I thought of sending to ask your kind assistance!" rejoined Madame Dubreuil. "Now then, Clara and Marie, off with you!"

As Madame Georges settled herself to her writing, Madame Dubreuil quitted the room by a door on one side, while the young friends, in company with the servant who had announced the arrival of the milkwoman from Stains, went out by the opposite side.

"Where is the poor woman?" inquired Clara.

"There she is, mademoiselle, in the court-yard, near the barns, with her children and her little donkey-cart."

"You shall see her, dear Marie," said Clara, taking the arm of La Goualeuse. "Poor woman! she looks so pale and sad in her deep widow's mourning. The last time she came here to arrange with my mother about the place, she made my heart ache. She wept bitterly as she spoke of her husband; then suddenly burst into a fit of rage as she mentioned his murderer. Really, she quite frightened me, she looked so desperate and full of fury. But, after all, her resentment was natural. Poor thing! I am sure I pity her; some people are very unfortunate, are they not, Marie?"

"Alas, yes, they are, indeed!" replied the Goualeuse, sighing deeply. "There are some persons who appear born only to trouble and sorrow, as you justly observe, Miss Clara."

"This is really very unkind of you, Marie," said Clara, colouring with impatience and displeasure. "This is the second time to-day you have called me 'Miss Clara.' What can I have possibly done to offend you? For I am sure you must be angry with me, or you would not do what you know vexes me so very much."

"How is it possible that *you* could ever offend *me?*"

"Then why do you say '*miss?*' You know very well that both Madame Georges and my mother have both scolded you for doing it. And I give you due warning, if ever you repeat this great offence, I will have you well scolded again. Now then, will you be good or not? Speak!"

"Dear Clara, pray pardon me! Indeed, I was not thinking when I spoke."

"Not thinking!" repeated Clara, sorrowfully. "What! after eight long days' absence you cannot give me your attention even for five minutes? Not thinking! That would be bad enough; but that is not it, Marie. And I tell you what, it is my belief you are too proud to own so humble a friend as myself."

Fleur-de-Marie made no answer, but her whole countenance assumed the pallor of death.

A woman, dressed as a widow, and in deep mourning, had just caught sight of her, and uttered a cry of rage and horror which seemed to freeze the poor girl's blood. This woman was the person who supplied the Goualeuse with her daily milk, during the time the latter dwelt with the ogress at the *tapis-franc*.

The scene which ensued took place in one of the yards belonging to the farm, in the presence of all the labourers, both male and female, who chanced just then to be returning to the house to take their mid-day meal. Beneath a shed stood a small cart, drawn by a donkey, and containing the few household possessions of the widow: a boy of about twelve years of age, aided by two younger children, was beginning to unload the vehicle. The milkwoman herself was a woman of about forty years of age, her countenance coarse, masculine, and expressive of great resolution. She was, as we before stated, attired in the deepest mourning, and her eyelids looked red and inflamed with recent weeping. Her first impulse at the sight of the Goualeuse had been terror; but quickly did that feeling change into grief and rage, while the most violent anger contracted her features. Rapidly darting towards the unhappy girl, she seized her by

the arm, and, presenting her to the gaze of the farm-servants, she exclaimed,—

"Here is a creature who is acquainted with the assassin of my poor husband! I have seen her more than twenty times speaking to the ruffian when I was selling my milk at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie; she used to come to buy a ha'porth every morning. She

The Milkwoman.

knows well enough who it was struck the blow that made me a widow, and my poor children fatherless. 'Birds of a feather flock together,' and such loose characters as she is are sure to be linked in with thieves and murderers. Oh, you shall not escape me, you abandoned wretch!" cried the milkwoman, who had now lashed herself into a perfect fury, and who, seeing poor Fleur-de-Marie confused and terror-stricken at this sudden attack, endeavouring to escape from it by flight, grasped her fiercely by the other arm also. Clara, almost speechless with surprise and alarm at this outrageous conduct, had been quite incapable of interfering; but this increased violence on the part of the widow seemed to restore her to herself, and angrily addressing the woman she said,—

"What is the meaning of this improper behaviour? Are you out of your senses? Has grief turned your brain? Good woman, I pity you! But let us pass on; you are mistaken."

"Mistaken!" repeated the woman, with a bitter smile; "me mistaken! No, no, there is no mistake! Just look at her pale, guilty looks! Hark how her very teeth rattle in her head! Ah, she knows well enough there is no mistake! Ah, you may hold your wicked tongue if you like; but justice will find a way to make you speak. You shall go with me before the mayor; do you hear? Oh, it is not worth while resisting! I have good strong wrists; I can hold you. And, sooner than you should escape, I would carry you every step of the way."

"You good-for-nothing, insolent woman! how dare you presume to speak in this way to my dear friend and sister?"

"Your sister, Mademoiselle Clara! Believe me, it is you who are deceived—it is you who have lost your senses," bawled the enraged milkwoman, in a loud, coarse voice. "Your sister! A likely story a girl out of the streets, who was the companion of the very lowest wretches in the worst part of the Cité, should be a sister of yours!"

At these words the assembled labourers, who naturally enough took that part in the affair which concerned a person of their own class, and who really sympathised with the bereaved milkwoman, gave utterance to deep, threatening words, in which the name of Fleur-de-Marie was angrily mingled. The three children, hearing their mother speaking in a loud tone, and fearing they knew not what, ran to her, and, clinging to her dress, burst out into a loud fit of weeping. The sight of these poor little fatherless things, dressed also in deep mourning, increased the pity of the spectators for the unfortunate widow, while it redoubled their indignation against Fleur-de-Marie; while Clara, completely frightened by these demonstrations of approaching violence, exclaimed, in an agitated tone, to the group of farm-labourers,—

"Take this woman off the premises directly! Do you not perceive grief has driven her out of her senses? Marie! dear Marie! never mind what she says. She is mad, poor creature, and knows not what she does!"

The poor Goualeuse, pale, exhausted, and almost fainting, made no effort to escape from the powerful grasp of the incensed milkwoman; she hung her head, as though unable or unwilling to meet the gaze of friend or foe. Clara, attributing her condition to the terror excited by so alarming a scene, renewed her commands to the labourers, "Did you not hear me desire that this mad woman might be instantly taken away from the farm? However, unless she immediately ceases her rude and insolent language, I can promise her, by way of punishment, she shall neither have the situation my mother promised her, nor ever be suffered to put her foot on the premises again."

Not a person stirred to obey Clara's orders; on the contrary, one of the boldest among the party exclaimed,—

"Well, but, Miss Clara, if your friend there is only a common girl out of the streets, and, as such, acquainted with the murderer of this poor woman's husband, surely she ought to go before the mayor to give an account of herself and her bad companions!"

"I tell you," repeated Clara, with indignant warmth, and addressing the milkwoman, "you shall never enter this farm again unless you this very instant, and before all these people, humbly beg pardon of

Mademoiselle Marie for all the wicked things you have been saying about her!"

"You turn me off the premises then, mademoiselle, do you?" retorted the widow, with bitterness. "Well, so be it. Come, my poor children,

let us put the things back in the cart, and go and seek our bread elsewhere. God will take care of us. But, at least, when we go, we will take this abandoned young woman with us. She shall be made to tell the mayor, if she won't us, who it was that took away your dear father's life; for she knows well enough—she who was the daily companion of the worst set of ruffians who infest Paris. And you, miss," added she, looking spitefully and insolently at Clara, "you should not, because you choose to make friends with low girls out of the streets, and because you happen to be rich, be quite so hard-hearted and unfeeling to poor creatures like me!"

"No more she ought," exclaimed one of the labourers; "the poor woman is right!"

"Of course she is—she is only standing up for her own!"

"Poor thing, she has no one now to do so for her! Why, they have murdered her husband among them! I should think that might content them, without trampling the poor woman under foot."

"One comfort is, nobody can stop her from doing all in her power to bring the murderers of her husband to justice."

"It is a shame to send her away in this manner, like a dog!"

"Can she help it, poor creature, if Miss Clara thinks proper to take up with common girls and thieves, and make them her companions?"

"Infamous, to turn an honest woman, a poor widow with helpless children, into the streets for such a base girl as that!"

These different speeches, uttered nearly simultaneously by the surrounding crowd, were rapidly assuming a most hostile and threatening tone, when Clara joyfully exclaimed,—

"Thank God, here comes my mother!"

It was, indeed, Madame Dubreuil, who was crossing the court-yard on her return from the pavilion.

"Now, then, my children," said Madame Dubreuil, gaily approaching the assembled group, "will you come in to breakfast? I declare it is quite late! I dare say you are both hungry? Come, Marie!—Clara!"

"Mother," cried Clara, pointing to the widow, "you are fortunately just in time to save my dear sister Marie from the insults and violence of that woman. Oh, pray order her away instantly! If you only knew what she had the audacity to say to Marie!"

"Impossible, Clara!"

"Nay, but, dear mother, only look at my poor dear sister! See how she trembles! She can scarcely support herself. Oh, it is a shame and disgrace such conduct should ever have been offered to a guest of ours! My dear, dear friend—Marie, dear!—look up, and say you are not angry with *us*. Pray, pray tell me, you will try and forget it!"

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Madame Dubreuil, looking around her with a disturbed and uneasy look, after having observed the despairing agony of the Goualeuse.

"Ah, now we shall have justice done the poor widow woman!" murmured the labourers. "Madame will see *her* righted, no doubt about it!"

"Now then," exclaimed the milkwoman, exultingly, "here is Madame Dubreuil. Now, my fine miss," continued she, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, "you will have your turn of being turned out of doors!"

"Is it true, then," cried Madame Dubreuil, addressing the widow, who still kept firm hold of Fleur-de-Marie's arm, "that you have dared to insult my daughter's friend, as she asserts? Is this the way you shew your gratitude for all I have done to serve you? Will you leave that young lady alone?"

"Yes, madame," replied the woman, relinquishing her grasp of Fleur-de-Marie, "at your bidding I will; for I respect you too much to disobey you. And, besides, I owe you much gratitude for all your kindness to a poor, friendless creature like myself. But, before you blame

me, and drive me off the premises with my poor children, just question that wretched creature that has caused all this confusion what she knows of *me*. *I* know a pretty deal more of *her* than is to her credit!"

"For Heaven's sake, Marie," exclaimed Madame Dubreuil, almost petrified with astonishment, "what does this woman allude to? Do you hear what she says?"

"Are you, or are you not known by the name of the Goualeuse?" said the milkwoman to Marie.

"Yes," said the wretched girl, in a low, trembling voice, and without venturing to lift up her eyes towards Madame Dubreuil—"yes, I am called so."

"There—you see!" vociferated the enraged labourers. "She owns it!—she owns it!"

"What does she own?" inquired Madame Dubreuil, half frightened at the assent given by Fleur-de-Marie.

"Leave her to me, madame," resumed the widow, "and you shall hear her confess that she was living in a house of the most infamous description, in the Rue-aux-Fêves in the Cité, and that *she* every morning purchased a half-pennyworth of milk of *me*. She cannot deny either having repeatedly spoken in my presence to the murderer of my poor husband. Oh, she knows him well enough, I am quite certain: a pale young man, who smoked a great deal, and always wore a cap and a blouse,

and wore his hair very long; she could tell his name if she chose. Is this true, or is it a lie?" vociferously demanded the milkwoman.

"I may have spoken to the man who killed your husband," answered Fleur-de-Marie, in a faint voice; "for, unhappily, there are more than

one in the Cité capable of such a crime. But, indeed, I know not of whom you are speaking!"

"What does she say?" asked Madame Dubreuil, horror-struck at her words. "She admits having possibly conversed with murderers?"

"Oh, such lost wretches as she is," replied the widow, "have no better companions!"

At first, utterly stupefied by so singular a discovery, confirmed, indeed, by Fleur-de-Marie's own admission, Madame Dubreuil seemed almost incapable of comprehending the scene before her; but quickly the whole truth presented itself to her mental vision, and, shrinking from the unfortunate girl with horror and disgust, she hastily seized her daughter by the dress, as she was about to sustain the sinking form of the poor Goualeuse, and, drawing her towards her with a sudden violence, she exclaimed,—

"Clara! for Heaven's sake approach not that vile, that abandoned young woman! Oh, dreadful, indeed, ever to have admitted her here! But how came Madame Georges to have her under her roof? And how could she so far insult me as to bring her here, and allow my daughter to—— This is, indeed, disgraceful! I hardly know whether to trust the evidence of my own senses. But Madame Georges must have been as much imposed on as myself, or she never would have permitted such an indignity. No, no! she is incapable of such dishonourable conduct. It would, indeed, be a disgrace for one female so to have deceived another."

Poor Clara, terrified and almost heart-broken at this distressing scene, could scarcely believe herself awake. It seemed as though she were under the influence of a fearful dream. Her innocent and pure mind comprehended not the frightful charges brought against her friend; but she understood enough to fill her with the most poignant grief at the unfortunate position of La Goualeuse, who stood mute, passive, and downcast, like a criminal in the presence of the judge.

"Come, come, my child," repeated Madame Dubreuil, "let us quit this disgraceful scene." Then, turning towards Fleur-de-Marie, she said,—

"As for you, worthless girl, the Almighty will punish you as you deserve for your deceit! That my child, good and virtuous as she is, should ever have been allowed to call you sister or friend! Her sister! You—the very vilest of the vile!—the outcast of the most depraved and lost wretches! What hardihood, what effrontery, you must have possessed, to dare to shew your face among good and honest people, when your proper place would have been along with your bad companions in a prison!"

"Ay, ay!" cried all the labourers at once; "let her be sent off to prison at once. She knows the murderer! Let her be made to declare who and what he is."

"She is most likely his accomplice!"

"You see," exclaimed the widow, doubling her fist in the face of the Goualeuse, "that my words have come true. Justice will overtake you before you can commit other crimes."

"As for you, my good woman," said Madame Dubreuil to the milk-woman, "far from sending you away, I shall well reward you for the

service you have done me in unmasking this infamous girl's real character."

"There, I told you," murmured the voices of the labourers, "our mistress always does justice to every one!"

"Come, Clara," resumed Madame Dubreuil, "let us retire and seek Madame Georges, that she may clear up her share of this disgraceful business, or she and I never meet again; for either she has herself been most dreadfully deceived, or her conduct towards us is of the very worst description."

"But, mother, only look at poor Marie!"

"Oh, never mind her! Let her die of shame, if she likes—there will be one wicked, hardened girl less in the world. Treat her with the contempt she deserves. I will not suffer you to remain another instant where she is. It is impossible for a young person like you to notice her in any way without disgracing herself."

"My dear mother," answered Clara, resisting her mother's attempts to draw her away, "I do not understand what you mean. Marie must be wrong in some way, since you say so! But look, only look at her—she is fainting! Pity her! Oh, mother, let her be ever so guilty, pray take pity on her present distress!"

"Oh, Mademoiselle Clara, you are good—very, very good—to pardon me and care for me," uttered poor Fleur-de-Marie, in a faint voice, casting a look of unutterable gratitude on her young protectress. "Believe me, it was sorely against my will ever to deceive you; and daily, hourly, have I reproached myself for so doing."

"Mother!" exclaimed Clara, in the most piteous tones, "are you then so merciless? Can you not pity her?"

"Pity!" returned Madame Dubreuil, scornfully. "No, I waste no pity on such as she is. Come, I say! Were it not that I consider it the office of Madame Georges to clear the place of so vile a creature, I would have her spurned from the doors, as though she carried the plague about with her." So saying, the angry mother seized her daughter's hand, and, spite of all her struggles, led her away, Clara continually turning back her head, and saying,—

"Marie, my sister, I know not what they accuse you of; but I am quite convinced of your innocence. Be assured of my constant love, whatever they may say or do."

"Silence! silence, I command!" cried Madame Dubreuil, placing her hand over her daughter's mouth. "Speak not another word, I insist! Fortunately, we have plenty of witnesses to testify that, after the odious discovery we have just made, you were not suffered to remain a single instant with this lost and unfortunate young woman. You can all answer for that, can you not, my good people?" continued she, speaking to the assembled labourers.

"Yes, yes, madame," replied one of them; "we all know well enough that Mademoiselle Clara was not allowed to stop with this bad girl a single instant after you found out her wickedness. No doubt she is a thief, or she would not be so intimate with murderers."

Madame Dubreuil led Clara to the house, while the Goualeuse remained in the midst of the hostile circle which had now formed around

her. Spite of the reproaches of Madame Dubreuil, her presence, and that of Clara, had, in some degree, served to allay the fears of Fleur-de-Marie as to the probable termination of the scene. But after the departure of both mother and daughter, when she found herself so entirely at the mercy of the enraged crowd, her strength seemed to forsake her, and she was obliged to keep herself from falling by leaning on the parapet of the deep watering-place where the farm cattle were accustomed to drink.

Nothing could be conceived more touching than the attitude of the unfortunate girl, nor could a more threatening appearance have been displayed than was exhibited in the words and looks of the countrymen and women who surrounded her. Seated, or rather supporting herself on the narrow margin of the wall which enclosed the drinking-place, her head hanging down, and concealed by both hands, her neck and bosom hid by the ends of the little red cotton handkerchief which was twisted around her cap, the poor Goualeuse, mute and motionless, presented a most touching picture of grief and resignation.

At some little distance from Fleur-de-Marie stood the widow of the murdered man. Triumphant in her vindictive rage, and still further excited by the indignation expressed by Madame Dubreuil, she pointed out the wretched object of her wrath to the labourers and her children, with gestures of contempt and detestation. The farm-servants, who had

now formed into a close circle, sought not to conceal their disgust and thirst for vengeance; their rude countenances expressed at once rage, desire for revenge, and a sort of insulting raillery. The women were even still more bitter, and bent upon mischief. Neither did the striking beauty of the Goualeuse tend to allay their wrath. But neither men nor women could pardon Fleur-de-Marie the heinous offence of having, up to that hour, been treated by their superiors as an equal; and some of the men now present having been unsuccessful candidates for the vacant situations at Bouqueval, and attributing their failure to Madame Georges, when, in reality, their disappointment arose entirely from their recommendations not

being sufficiently satisfactory, determined to avail themselves of the opportunity now before them to wreak their vexation and ill will on the head of one she was known to protect and love. The impulses of ignorant minds always lead to extremes either of good or bad. But they speedily put on a most dangerous form, when the fury of an enraged multitude is directed against those who may already have awakened their personal anger or aversion.

Although the greater number of the labourers now collected together might not have been so strictly virtuous and free from moral blame as to be justified in throwing the first stone at the trembling, fainting girl; who was the object of all their concentrated wrath, yet, on the present occasion, they unanimously spoke and acted as though her very presence were capable of contaminating them; and their delicacy and modesty alike revolted at the bare recollection of the depraved class to which she had belonged, and they shuddered to be so near one who confessed to having frequently conversed with assassins. Nothing, then, was wanting to urge on a blind and prejudiced crowd, still further instigated by the example of Madame Dubreuil.

"Take her before the mayor!" cried one.

"Ay, ay! and, if she won't walk, we'll drag her."

"And for her to have the impudence to dress herself like one of us honest girls!" said an awkward, ill-looking farm-wench.

"I'm sure," rejoined another female, with her mock-modest air, "one might have thought she would go to heaven, spite of priest or confession!"

"Why, she had the assurance even to attend mass!"

"No! did she? Why did she not join in the communion afterwards then, I should like to know?"

"And then she must play the young lady, and hold up her head as high as our betters!"

"As though we were not good company enough for her!"

"However, every dog has his day!"

"Oh, I'll make you find your tongue, and tell who it was took my husband's life!" vociferated the enraged widow, breaking out into a fresh storm, now she felt her party so strong. "You all belong to one gang; and I'm not sure but I saw you among them at the very time and place when the bloody deed was done! Come, come; don't stand there shedding your crocodile tears: you are found out, and may as well leave off shamming any more. Shew your face, I say! You are a beauty—ain't you?" And the infuriated woman, suiting the action to the word, violently snatched the two hands of poor Fleur-de-Marie from the pale and grief-worn countenance they concealed, and down which tears were fast streaming.

The Goualeuse, sinking under a sense of shame, and terrified at finding herself thus at the mercy of her persecutors, joined her hands, and, turning towards the milkwoman her supplicating and timid looks, she said, in a gentle voice,—

"Indeed, indeed, madam, I have been at the farm of Bouqueval these last two months. How could I, then, have been witness to the dreadful misfortune you speak of? And——"

The faint tones of Fleur-de-Marie's voice were drowned in the loud uproarious cries of the surrounding multitude.

"Let us take her before the mayor! She can speak; and she shall, too, to some purpose. March, march, my fine madam! On with you!"

So saying, the menacing crowd pressed upon the poor girl, who, mechanically crossing her hands on her bosom, looked eagerly around, as though in search of help.

"Oh," cried the milkwoman, "you need not stare about in that wild way. Mademoiselle Clara is not here now to take your part. You don't slip through my fingers, I promise you!"

"Alas! madam," uttered Fleur-de-Marie, trembling violently, "I seek not to escape from you. Be assured, I am both ready and willing to answer all the questions put to me, if I can be of any service to you by so doing. But what harm have I done to these people, who surround and threaten me in this manner?"

"What have you done?" repeated a number of voices; "why, you have dared to stick yourself up with our betters, when we, who were worth thousands more than such as you, were made to keep our distance —that's what you have done!"

"And what right had you to cause this poor woman to be turned away with her fatherless children?" cried another.

"Indeed, it was no fault of mine. It was Mademoiselle Clara, who wished——"

"That is not true!" interrupted the speaker. "You never even opened your mouth in her favour. No, not you! You were too well pleased to see her bread taken from her."

"No, no! no more she did," chimed in a burst of voices, male and female.

"She is a regular bad one!"

"A poor widow-woman, with three helpless children!"

"If I did not plead for her with Mademoiselle Clara, it was because I had not power to utter a word."

"You could find strength enough to talk to a set of thieves and murderers!"

And, as is frequently the case in public commotions, the country people, more ignorant than vicious, actually talked themselves into a fury, until their own words and violence excited them to fresh acts of rage and vengeance against their unhappy victim.

The menacing throng, gesticulating and loudly threatening, advanced closer and closer towards Fleur-de-Marie, while the widow appeared to have lost all command over herself. Separated from the deep pond only by the parapet on which she was leaning, the Goualeuse shuddered at the idea of their throwing her into the water; and, extending towards them her supplicating hands, she exclaimed,—

"Good, kind people! what do you want with me? For pity's sake do not harm me!"

And as the milkwoman, with fierce and angry gestures, kept coming nearer and nearer, holding her clenched fist almost in the face of Fleur-de-Marie, the poor girl, drawing herself back in terror, said, in beseeching tones,—

"Pray, pray, do not press so closely on me, or you will cause me to fall into the water."

These words suggested a cruel idea to the rough spectators. Intending merely one of those practical jokes which, however diverting to the projectors, are fraught with serious harm and suffering to the unfortunate object of them, one of the most violent of the number called out, "Let's give her a plunge in! Duck her!—duck her!"

"Yes, yes!" chimed several voices, accompanied with brutal laughter, and noisy clapping of hands, with other tokens of unanimous approval. "Throw her in!—in with her!"

"A good dip will do her good. Water won't kill her!"

"That will teach her not to shew her face among honest people again!"

"To be sure. Toss her in!—fling her over!"

"Fortunately, the ice was broken this morning!"

"And when she has had her bath she may go and tell her street companions how the folks at Arnouville farm serve such vile girls as she is!"

As these unfeeling speeches reached her ear, as she heard their barbarous jokes, and observed the exasperated looks of the brutally excited individuals who approached her to carry their threat into execution, Fleur-de-Marie gave herself over for lost. But to her first horror of a violent death succeeded a sort of gloomy satisfaction. The future wore so threatening and hopeless an aspect for her, that she thanked Heaven for shortening her trial. Not another complaining word escaped her; but gently falling on her knees, and piously folding her hands upon her breast, she closed her eyes, and meekly resigned herself to her fate.

The labourers, surprised at the attitude and mute resignation of the Goualeuse, hesitated a moment in the accomplishment of their savage design; but, rallied on their folly and irresolution by the female part of the assemblage, they recommenced their uproarious cries, as though to inspire themselves with the necessary courage to complete their wicked purpose.

Just as two of the most furious of the party were about to seize on Fleur-de-Marie, a loud, thrilling voice was heard, exclaiming,—

"Stop! I command you!"

And at the very instant Madame Georges, who had forced a passage through the crowd, reached the still kneeling Goualeuse, took her in her arms, and, raising her, cried,—

"Rise up, my child! Stand up, my beloved daughter! the knee should be bent to God alone!"

The expression and attitude of Madame Georges were so full of courageous firmness, that the actors in this cruel scene shrunk back speechless and confounded. Indignation coloured her usually pale features, and casting on the labourers a stern look she said to them, in a loud and threatening voice,—

"Wretches!—are you not ashamed of such brutal conduct to a helpless girl like this?"

"She is——"

"My daughter!" exclaimed Madame Georges, with severity, and abruptly interrupting the man who was about to speak; "and, as such,

both cherished and protected by our worthy curé, M. l'Abbé Laporte, whom every one venerates and loves; and those whom he loves and esteems ought to be respected by every one!"

These simple words effectually imposed silence on the crowd. The curé of Bouqueval was looked upon throughout his district almost as a saint, and many there present were well aware of the interest he took in the Goualeuse. Still a confused murmur went on, and Madame Georges, fully comprehending its import, added,—

"Suppose this poor girl were the very worst of creatures — the most abandoned of her sex — your conduct is not the less disgraceful! What

offence has she committed? And what right have you to punish her?— you, who call yourselves men, to exert your strength and power against one poor, feeble, unresisting female! Surely it was a cowardly action all to unite against a defenceless girl! Come, Marie! come, child of my heart! let us return home: there, at least, you are known, and justly appreciated."

Madame Georges took the arm of Fleur-de-Marie, while the labourers, ashamed of their conduct, the impropriety of which they now perceived, respectfully dispersed. The widow alone remained; and, advancing boldly to Madame Georges, she said, in a resolute tone,—

"I don't care for a word you say! and, as for this girl, she does not quit this place until after she has deposed before the mayor as to all she knows of my poor husband's murder."

"My good woman!" said Madame Georges, restraining herself by a violent effort, "my daughter has no deposition to make here, but, at any future period that justice may require her testimony, let her be summoned, and she shall attend, with myself: until then no person has a right to question her."

"But, madame, I say ——"

Madame Georges prevented the milkwoman from proceeding by replying, in a severe tone,—

"The severe affliction you have experienced can scarcely excuse your conduct, and you will one day regret the violence you have so improperly excited. Mademoiselle Marie lives with me at the Bouqueval farm: inform the judge who received your deposition of that circumstance, and say that we await his further orders."

The widow, unable to argue against words so temperately and wisely spoken, seated herself on the parapet of the drinking-place, and, embracing her children, began to weep bitterly. Almost immediately after this scene Pierre brought the chaise, into which Madame Georges and Fleur-de-Marie mounted, to return to Bouqueval.

As they passed before the farm-house of Arnouville, the Goualeuse perceived Clara, who had hid herself behind a partly closed shutter, weeping bitterly. She was evidently watching for a last glimpse of her friend, to whom she waved her handkerchief in token of farewell.

"Ah, madame! what shame to me, and vexation to you, has arisen this morning from our visit to Arnouville!" said Fleur-de-Marie to her adopted parent, when they found themselves in the sitting-room at Bouqueval: "you have probably quarrelled for ever with Madame Dubreuil, and all on my account! Oh, I foresaw something terrible was about to happen! God has justly punished me for deceiving that good lady and her daughter! I am the unfortunate cause of perpetual disunion between yourself and your friend!"

"My dear child, my friend is a warm-hearted, excellent woman, but rather weak; still I know her too well not to feel certain, that by to-morrow she will regret her foolish violence of to-day."

"Alas, madame, think not that I wish to take her part in preference to yours! No, God forbid! but pardon me if I say that I fear your great kindness towards me has induced you to shut your eyes to—— Put yourself in the place of Madame Dubreuil—to be told that the companion of your darling daughter was—what I was—— Ah, could any one blame such natural indignation?"

Unfortunately, Madame Georges could not find any satisfactory reply to this question of Fleur-de-Marie's, who continued, with much excitement,—

"Soon will the degrading scene of yesterday be in every body's mouth! I fear not for myself, but who can tell how far it may affect the reputation of Mademoiselle Clara? Who can answer for it that I may not have tarnished her fair fame for ever? for did she not, in the face of the assembled crowd, persist in calling me her friend—her sister? I ought to have obeyed my first impulse, and resisted the affection which attracted me towards Mademoiselle Dubreuil, and, at the risk of incurring her dislike, have refused the friendship she offered me. But I forgot the distance which separated me from her, and now, as you perceive, I am suffering the just penalty: I am punished—oh, how cruelly punished! for I have perhaps done an irreparable injury to one so virtuous and so good."

"My child," said Madame Georges, after a brief silence, "you are wrong to accuse yourself so cruelly. 'Tis true your past life has been guilty—very highly so: but are we to reckon as nothing your having, by the sincerity of your repentance, obtained the protection and favour of our excellent curé? and was it not under his auspices and mine you were introduced to Madame Dubreuil? and did not your own amiable qualities inspire her with the attachment she so voluntarily professed for you? was it not she herself who requested you to call Clara your sister? and, finally, as I told her just now, for I neither wished nor ought to conceal the whole truth from her, how could I, certain as I felt of your sincere repentance—how could I, by divulging the past, render your attempts to reinstate yourself more painful and difficult, perhaps impossible, by throwing you, in despair of being again received by the good and virtuous, back upon the scorn and derision of those who, equally guilty, equally unfortunate as you have been, would not perhaps like you have preserved the secret instinct of honour and virtue? The disclosure made by the woman to-day is alike to be lamented and feared; but could I, in anticipation of an almost impossible casualty, sacrifice your present comfort and future repose?"

"Ah, madame, a convincing proof of the false and miserable position I must ever hold may be found in the fact of your being obliged to conceal the past; and that the mother of Clara despises me for that past; views me in the same contemptuous light all will henceforward behold me, for the scene at the farm at Arnouville will be quickly spread abroad—every one will hear of it! Oh, I shall die with shame! never again can I meet the looks of any human being!"

"Not even mine, my child?" said Madame Georges, bursting into

tears, and opening her arms to Fleur-de-Marie; "you will never find in my heart any other feeling than the devoted tenderness of a mother. Courage, then, dear Marie! console yourself with the knowledge of your hearty and sincere repentance; you are here surrounded with true and affectionate

friends, let this home be your world. We will anticipate the exposure you dread so much: our worthy abbé shall assemble the people about the farm, who all regard you with love and respect, and he shall tell them the sad history of your past life; and, trust me, my child, told as the tale would be by him, whose word is law here, such a disclosure will but serve to increase the interest all take in your welfare."

"I would fain think so, dear madame, and I submit myself. Yesterday, when we were conversing together, M. le Curé predicted to me that I should be called upon painfully to expiate my past offences: I ought not, therefore, to be astonished at their commencement. He told me also that my earthly trials would be accepted as some atonement for the great wrong I have done: I would fain hope so. Supported through these painful ordeals by you and my venerable pastor, I will not—I ought not to complain."

"You will go to his presence ere long, and never will his counsels have been more valuable to you. It is already half-past four; prepare yourself for your visit to the Rectory, my child. I shall employ myself in writing to M. Rodolph an account of what occurred at the farm at Arnouville, and send my letter off by express; I will then join you at our venerable abbé's, for it is most important we should talk over matters together."

Shortly after, the Goualeuse quitted the farm, in order to repair to the Rectory by the hollow road, where the old woman, the Schoolmaster, and Tortillard, had agreed to meet.

* * * * * *

As may have been perceived in her conversations with Madame Georges and the curé of Bouqueval, Fleur-de-Marie had so nobly profited by the example of her benefactors, so assimilated herself with their principles, that, remembering her past degradation, she daily became more hopeless of recovering the place she had lost in society. As her mind expanded so did her fine and noble instincts arrive at mature growth, and bring forth worthy fruits in the midst of the atmosphere of honour and purity in which she lived. Had she possessed a less exalted mind, a less exquisite sensibility, or an imagination of weaker quality, Fleur-de-Marie might easily have been comforted and consoled; but, unfortunately, not a single day passed in which she did not recall, and almost live over again, with an agony of horror and disgust, the disgraceful miseries of her past life. Let the reader figure to himself a young creature of sixteen, candid and pure, and rejoicing in that very candour and purity, thrown, by frightful circumstances, into the infamous den of the ogress, and irrecoverably subjected to the dominion of such a fiend,—such was the reaction of the past on the present on Fleur-de-Marie's mind. Let us still further display the resentful retrospect, or, rather, the moral agony with which the Goualeuse suffered so excruciatingly, by saying that she regretted, more frequently than she had courage to own to the curé, the not having perished in the midst of the slough of wickedness by which she was encompassed.

However little a person may reflect, or however limited his knowledge

of life may be, he will not refuse to assent to our remarks touching the commiseration which such a case as Fleur-de-Marie's fully called for. She was deserving of both interest and pity, not only because she had never known what it was to have her affections fairly aroused, but because all her senses were torpid, and as yet unawakened by noble impulses—untaught, unaided, unadvised. Is it not wonderful that this unfortunate girl, thrown at the tender age of sixteen years in the midst of the herd of savage and demoralised beings who infest the Cité, should yet have viewed her degrading position with horror and disgust, and have escaped from the sink of iniquity morally pure and free from sin?

CHAPTER II.

THE HOLLOW WAY.

THE sun was descending, and the fields were silent and deserted. Fleur-de-Marie had reached the entrance to the hollow way, which it was necessary to cross in her walk to the Rectory, when she saw a little lame lad, dressed in a grey blouse and blue cap, come out of the ravine. He appeared in tears, and directly he saw the Goualeuse he ran towards her.

"Oh, good lady, have pity on me, I pray!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands with a supplicating look.

"What do you want? What is the matter with you, my poor boy?" said the Goualeuse, with an air of interest.

"Alas, good lady! my poor grandmother, who is very, very old, has fallen down in trying to climb up the ravine, and hurt herself very much. I am afraid she has broken her leg, and I am too weak to lift her up myself. *Mon Dieu!* what shall I do if you will not come and help me? Perhaps my poor grandmother will die!"

The Goualeuse, touched with the grief of the little cripple, replied,—

"I am not very strong myself, my child; but perhaps I can help you to assist your poor grandmother. Let us go to her as quickly as we can! I live at the farm close by here; and, if the poor old woman cannot walk there with us, I will send somebody to help her!"

"Oh, good lady, *le bon Dieu* will bless you for your kindness! It is close by here—not two steps down this hollow way, as I told you. It was in going down the slope that she fell."

"You do not belong to this part of the country?" said the Goualeuse, inquiringly following Tortillard, whom our readers have, no doubt, recognised.

"No, good lady, we came from Ecouen!"

"And where are you going?"

"To a good clergyman's, who lives on the hill out there," said Bras Rouge's son, to increase Fleur-de-Marie's confidence.

"To the Abbé Laporte's, perhaps?"

"Yes, good lady; to the Abbé Laporte's. My poor grandmother knows him very, very well!"

"And I was going there also. How strange that we should meet!" said Fleur-de-Marie, advancing still further into the hollow way.

"Grandmamma, I'm coming—I'm coming! Take courage, and I will bring you help!" cried Tortillard, to forewarn the Schoolmaster and the Chouette to prepare themselves to lay hands on their victim.

"Your grandmother, then, did not fall down far off from here?" inquired the Goualeuse.

"No, good lady; behind that large tree there, where the road turns, about twenty paces from here."

Suddenly Tortillard stopped.

The noise of a horse galloping was heard in the silence of the place.

"All is lost again!" said Tortillard to himself.

The road made a very sudden bend a few yards from the spot where Bras Rouge's son was with the Goualeuse. A horseman appeared at the angle, and when he came nigh to the young girl he stopped. And then was heard the trot of another horse; and some moments after there followed a groom in a brown coat, with silver buttons, white leather breeches, and top-boots. A leathern belt secured round his waist his master's macintosh. His master was dressed simply in a stout brown frock-coat, and a pair of light grey trowsers, which fitted closely. He was mounted on a thorough-bred and splendid bay horse, which he sat admirably, and which, in spite of a fast gallop, had not a bead of sweat on his skin, which was as bright and brilliant as a star. The groom's grey horse, which stood motionless a few paces behind his master, was also well-bred and perfect of his kind. In the handsome dark face of the gentleman Tortillard recognised the Vicomte de Saint-Rémy, who was supposed to be the lover of the Duchesse de Lucenay.

"My pretty lass," said the viscount to the Goualeuse, whose lovely countenance struck him, "would you be so obliging as to tell me the way to the village of Arnouville?"

Fleur-de-Marie's eyes sunk before the bold and admiring look of the young man, as she replied,—

"On leaving the sunken road, sir, you must take the first turning to the right, and that path will lead you to an avenue of cherry-trees, which is the straight road to Arnouville."

"A thousand thanks, my pretty lass! You tell me better than an old

woman, whom I found a few yards further on stretched under a tree, for I could only get groans and moans out of her."

"My poor grandmother!" said Tortillard, in a whining tone.

"One word more," said M. de Saint-Rémy, addressing La Goualeuse. "Can you tell me if I shall easily find M. Dubreuil's farm at Arnouville?"

Goualeuse could not prevent a shudder at these words, which recalled to her the painful scene of the morning. She replied,—

"The farm-buildings border the avenue which you must enter to reach Arnouville, sir."

"Once more, many thanks, my pretty dear!" said M. de Saint-Rémy; and he galloped off with his groom.

The handsome features of the viscount were in full animation whilst he was talking with Fleur-de-Marie, but when he was again alone they became darkened and contracted by painful uneasiness. Fleur-de-Marie, remembering the unknown person for whom they were so hastily preparing a pavilion at the farm of Arnouville by Madame de Lucenay's orders, felt convinced it was for this young and good-looking cavalier.

The sound of the horses' feet as they galloped on was heard for some time on the hard and frozen ground, and by degrees grew fainter, then were no longer heard, and all was once more hushed in silence. Tortillard breathed again. Desirous of encouraging and warning his accomplices, one of whom, the Schoolmaster, was concealed from the horsemen, Bras Rouge's son called out,—

"Granny! granny!—here I am! with the good lady who is coming to help you!"

"Quick, quick, my boy! The gentleman on horseback has made us lose some time," said the Goualeuse, walking at a quicker pace, that she might reach the turning into the hollow way.

She had scarcely entered it when the Chouette, who was hidden there, exclaimed,—

"Now then, *fourline!*"

Then springing upon the Goualeuse, the one-eyed hag seized her by the neck with one hand, whilst with the other she pressed her mouth; and Tortillard, throwing himself at the young girl's feet, clung round her legs, that she might not be able to stir.

This took place so rapidly, that the Chouette had no time to examine the Goualeuse's features; but during the few instants it required for the Schoolmaster to quit the hole in which he was ensconced, to grope his way along with his cloak, the beldame recognised her old victim.

"La Pegriotte!" she exclaimed, in great surprise. Then adding with savage delight, "What, is it you? Ah, the *baker* (the devil) sends you! It is your fate, then, to fall into my clutches! I have my vitriol in the *fiacre* now, and your white skin shall have a touch, miss; for it makes me sick to see your fine lady countenance. Come, my man, mind she don't bite; and hold her tight whilst we bundle her up."

The Schoolmaster seized the Goualeuse in his two powerful hands, and before she could utter a cry the Chouette threw the cloak over her head, and wrapped her up in it, tightly and securely. In a moment, Fleur-de-Marie, tied and enveloped, was without any power to move or call for assistance.

"Now take up your parcel, *fourline*," said the Chouette. "He! he! he! This is not such a load as the 'black peter' of the woman who was drowned in the Canal of St. Martin—is it, my man?" And as the brigand shuddered at these words, which reminded him of his fearful vision, the one-eyed hag resumed, "Well, well, what ails you, *fourline?* Why, you seem frozen! Ever since the morning, your teeth chatter as if you had the ague; and you look in the air as if you were looking for something there!"

"Vile impostor! He is looking to see the flies," said Tortillard.

"Come, quick! Haste forward, my man! Up with Pegriotte! That's it!" said the Chouette, as she saw the ruffian lift Fleur-de-Marie in his arms as he would carry a sleeping infant. "Quick to the coach!—quick—quick!"

"But who will lead me?" inquired the Schoolmaster, in a hoarse voice, and securing his light and flexible burden in his herculean arms.

"Old wise head!—he thinks of every thing!" said the Chouette.

Then, lifting aside her shawl, she unfastened a red pocket-handkerchief which covered her skinny neck, and, twisting it into its length, said to the Schoolmaster,—

"Open your *ivories*, and take the end of this *wipe* between them. Hold tight! Tortillard will take the other end in his hand, and you have nothing to do but to follow him. The good blind man requires a good dog! Here, brat!"

The cripple cut a caper, and made a sort of low and odd barking. Then, taking the other end of the handkerchief in his hand, he led the Schoolmaster in this way, whilst the Chouette hastened forward to apprise Barbillon. We have not attempted to paint Fleur-de-Marie's terror

when she found herself in the power of the Chouette and the School-master. She felt all her strength leave her, and could not offer the slightest resistance.

Some minutes afterwards the Goualeuse was lifted into the *fiacre* which Barbillon drove, and although it was night they closed the window-blinds carefully; and the three accomplices went, with their almost expiring victim, towards the Plain of Saint-Denis, where Thomas Seyton awaited them.

CHAPTER III.

CLÉMENCE D'HARVILLE.

THE reader will kindly excuse our having left one of our heroines in a most critical situation, the *dénoûment* of which we shall state hereafter.

It will be remembered that Rodolph had preserved Madame d'Harville from an imminent danger, occasioned by the jealousy of Sarah, who had acquainted M. d'Harville with the assignation Clémence had so imprudently granted to M. Charles Robert. Deeply affected with the scene he had witnessed, the prince returned directly home after quitting the Rue du Temple, putting off till the next day the visit he purposed paying to Mdlle. Rigolette and the distressed family of the unfortunate artisan, of whom we have spoken, believing them out of the reach of present want, thanks to the money he had given Madame d'Harville to convey to them, in order that her pretended charitable visit to the house might assume a more convincing appearance in the eyes of her husband.

Unfortunately, Rodolph was ignorant of Tortillard's having possessed himself of the purse, although the reader has already been told how the artful young thief contrived to effect the barefaced cheat.

About four o'clock the prince received the following letter, which was brought by an old woman, who went away the instant she had delivered it, without awaiting any answer.

"MY LORD,

"I owe you more than life; and I would fain express my heartfelt

gratitude for the invaluable service you have rendered me *to-day*. To-morrow shame would, perhaps, close my lips. If your royal highness will honour me with a call this evening, you will *finish* the day as you *began* it—by a generous action. D'ORBIGNY-D'HARVILLE.

"P.S. Do not, my lord, take the trouble to write an answer. I shall be at home all the evening."

However rejoiced Rodolph felt at having been the happy instrument of good to Madame d'Harville, he yet could not help regretting the sort of forced intimacy which this circumstance all at once established between himself and the marquise. Deeply struck with the graceful vivacity and extreme beauty of Clémence, yet wholly incapable of infringing upon the friendship which existed between himself and the marquis, Rodolph, directly he became aware of the passion which was springing up in his heart for the wife of his friend, almost denied himself (after having previously devoted a whole month to the most assiduous attentions) the pleasure of beholding her. And now, too, he recollected with much emotion the conversation he had overheard at the embassy between Tom and Sarah, when the latter, by way of accounting for her hatred and jealousy, had affirmed, and not without truth, that Madame d'Harville still felt, even unknown to herself, a serious affection for Rodolph.

Sarah was too acute, too penetrating, too well versed in the knowledge of the human heart, not to be well aware that Clémence, believing herself scorned by a man who had made so deep an impression on her heart, and yielding, from the effects of her irritated feelings, to the importunities of a perfidious friend, might be induced to interest herself in the imaginary woes of M. Charles Robert, without, consequently, forgetting Rodolph. Other women, faithful to the memory of a man they had once distinguished, would have remained indifferent to the melancholy looks of the commandant. Clémence d'Harville was therefore doubly blamable, although she had only yielded to the seduction of unhappiness, and, fortunately for her, had been preserved alike by a keen sense of duty and the remembrance of the prince (which still lurked in her heart, and kept faithful watch over it) from the commission of an irreparable fault.

A thousand contradictory emotions disturbed the mind of Rodolph, as he thought of his interview with Madame d'Harville. Firmly resolved to resist the predilection which attracted him to her society, sometimes he congratulated himself on being able to cast off his love for her by the recollection of her having entangled herself with such a being as Charles Robert; and the next instant he bitterly deplored seeing the flattering veil with which he had invested his idol fall to the ground.

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Clémence d'Harville, on her part, awaited the approaching interview with much anxiety; but the two prevailing sentiments which pervaded her breast were painful confusion, when she remembered the interference of Rodolph, and a fixed aversion when she thought of M. Charles Robert; and many reasons were concerned in this feeling of dislike almost approaching hatred itself. A woman will risk her honour or her life for a man, but she will never pardon him for having placed her in a mortifying or a ridiculous situation.

Madame d'Harville felt her cheeks flush, and her pulse beat rapidly, as she indignantly recalled the insulting looks and impertinent remarks of Madame Pipelet: nor was this all; after receiving from Rodolph an intimation of the danger she was incurring, Clémence had proceeded rapidly towards the fifth floor, as directed, but the position of the staircase was such that, as she hurried on, she perceived M. Charles Robert in his dazzling *robe de chambre*, at the very instant when, recognising the light step of the woman he expected, he, with a self-satisfied, confident, and triumphant look, set the door of his apartment half open. The air of insolent familiarity, expressed by the *négligée* toilette he had assumed, quickly enabled the marquise to perceive how entirely she had been mistaken in his character. Led away by the kindness and goodness of her heart, and the generosity of her disposition, to take a step which might for ever destroy her reputation, she had accorded this meeting, not from love, but solely from commiseration, in order to console him for the ridiculous part the bad taste of the Duke de Lucenay had made him play before her at the embassy. Words can ill describe the disgust and vexation with which Madame d'Harville beheld the slip-shod *déshabillé* of the commandant,

implying as it did his opinion how completely her ill-judged condescension had broken down the barriers of etiquette, and led him to consider no further respect towards her necessary.

The timepiece in the small *salon* which Madame d'Harville ordinarily occupied struck nine o'clock. Dressmakers and tavern-keepers have so much abused the style of Louis XV. and the *Renaissance*, that the marquise, a woman of infinite taste, had excluded from her apartments this description of ornament, now become so vulgarised, and confined it to that part of the hôtel devoted to the reception of visitors and grand entertainments. Nothing could be more elegant or more *distingué* than the fitting-up of the *salon* in which the marquise awaited Rodolph. The colour of the walls as well as the curtains (which, without either valances or draperies, were of Indian texture) was bright straw colour, on which were embroidered, in a darker shade, in unwrought silk, arabesques of the most beautiful designs and whimsical devices. Double curtains of *point d'Alençon* entirely concealed the windows. The rosewood doors were set off with gold mouldings, most beautifully carved, surrounding in each panel an oval medallion of Sèvres china, nearly a foot in diameter, representing a numberless variety of birds and flowers of surpassing brilliancy and beauty. The frames of the looking-glasses and the cornices of the curtains were also of rosewood, ornamented with similar raised work of silver gilt. The white marble mantelpiece, with its supporting Caryatides of antique beauty and exquisite grace, was from the chisel of the proud and imperious Marochetti, that great artist having consented to sculpture this delicious *chef-d'œuvre* in imitation of Benvenuto Cellini, who disdained not to model ewers and armour. Two candelabras, and two candlesticks of vermeil, forming groups of small figures beautifully executed, stood on either side of the timepiece, which was formed of a square block of *lapis-lazuli* raised on a pedestal of Oriental jasper, and surmounted with a large and magnificently enamelled golden cup, richly studded with rubies and pearls, once the property of the Florentine Republic. Several excellent pictures of the Venetian school, of middle size, completed this assemblage of elegance and refined taste.

Thanks to a most charming invention but recently introduced, this splendid yet simple apartment was lighted only by the soft rays of a lamp, the unground surface of whose crystal globe was half hid among a mass of real flowers, contained in an immensely large and deep blue and gold Japan cup, suspended from the ceiling like a lustre by three chains of vermeil, round which were entwined the green stalks of several climbing plants; while some of the flexible branches, thickly laden with flowers, overhanging the edge of the cup and hanging gracefully down, formed a waving fringe of fresh verdure, beautifully contrasting with the blue and gold enamel of the purple porcelain.

We have been thus precise in these details, trifling as they may seem, in order to give some idea of the exquisite taste possessed by Madame d'Harville (the almost invariable companion of an elevated mind), and also because misfortunes always strike us as more poignantly cruel when they insinuate themselves into abodes like this, the favoured possessors of which seem gifted by Providence with every thing to make life happy and enviable.

Buried in the downy softness of a large arm-chair, totally covered by the same straw-coloured Indian silk as formed the rest of the hangings, Clémence d'Harville sat, awaiting the arrival of Rodolph. Her hair was arranged in the most simple manner. She wore a high dress of black velvet, which well displayed the beauty and admirable workmanship of her large collar and cuffs of English lace, which prevented the extreme black of the velvet from contrasting too harshly with the dazzling whiteness of her throat and hands.

In proportion as the hour approached for her interview with Rodolph, the emotion of the marquise increased; but by degrees her embarrassment ceased, and firmer resolves took possession of her mind. After a long and mature reflection she came to the determination of confiding to Rodolph a great, a cruel secret, hoping by her frankness to win back that esteem she now so highly prized. Awakened by gratitude, her pristine admiration of Rodolph returned with fresh force; one of those secret whispers, which rarely deceives the heart that loves, told her that chance alone had not brought the prince so opportunely to her succour, and that his studied avoidance of her society during the last few months had originated in any thing but indifference. A vague suspicion also arose in her mind as to the reality and sincerity of the affection Sarah professed for her.

While deeply meditating on all these things a *valet de chambre*, having first gently tapped at the door, entered, saying,—

"Will it please you, my lady, to see Madame Ashton and my young lady?"

Madame d'Harville made an affirmative gesture of assent, and a little girl slowly entered the room.

The child was about four years old, and its countenance would have been a very charming one but for its sickly pallor and extreme meagreness. Madame Ashton, the governess, held it by the hand, but, directly Claire (that was the name of the little girl) saw her mother, she opened her arms, and, spite of her feebleness, ran towards her. Her light brown hair was plaited, and tied at each side of her forehead with bows of cherry-coloured riband. Her health was so delicate that she wore a wrapping dress of dark brown silk instead of one of those pretty little white muslin frocks trimmed with ribands of a similar colour as those in the hair, and well cut over the bosom to shew the plump, pinky arms, and smooth, fair shoulders, so lovely in healthy children. So sunken were the cheeks of poor Claire that her large dark eyes looked quite enormous. But, spite of every appearance of weakness, a sweet and gentle smile lit up her small features when she was placed on the lap of her mother, whom she kissed and embraced with intense yet mournful affection.

"How has she been of late, Madame Ashton?" inquired Madame d'Harville of the governess.

"Tolerably well, madame; although at one time I feared."

"Again!" cried Clémence, pressing her daughter to her heart with a movement of involuntary horror.

"Fortunately, madame, I was mistaken," said the governess, "and the whole passed away without any further alarm; Mademoiselle Claire became composed, and merely suffered from a momentary feeling of weak-

ness. She has not slept much this afternoon, but I could not coax her to bed without allowing her the pleasure of paying a visit to you."

"Dear little angel!" cried Madame d'Harville, covering her daughter with kisses.

The interesting child repaid her mother's caresses with infantine delight, when the groom of the chambers entered, and announced,—

"His royal highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

Claire, standing on her mother's lap, had thrown her arms about her neck, and was clasping her with all the force of which her tiny arms were capable. At the sight of Rodolph, Clémence blushed deeply, set her child gently down on the carpet, and signed to Madame Ashton to take her away; she then rose to receive her guest.

"You must give me leave," said Rodolph, smilingly, after having respectfully bowed to the marquise, "to renew my acquaintance with my little friend here, who I fear has almost forgotten me."

Mademoiselle Claire.

And, stooping down a little, he extended his hand to Claire, who, first gazing at him with her large eyes, curiously scrutinised his features, then, recognising him, she made a gentle inclination of the head, and blew him a kiss from the tips of her small, thin fingers.

"You remember my lord, then, my child?" asked Clémence of little Claire, who gave an assenting nod, and kissed her hand to Rodolph a second time.

"Her health appears to me much improved since I last saw her," said he, addressing himself with unfeigned interest to Clémence.

"Thank Heaven, my lord, she is better, though still sadly delicate and suffering."

The marquise and the prince, mutually embarrassed at the thoughts of the approaching interview, would have been equally glad to defer its commencement, through the medium of Claire's presence; but, the discreet Madame Ashton having taken her away, Rodolph and Clémence were left quite alone.

The arm-chair in which Madame d'Harville was reclining stood on the right hand of the chimney, and Rodolph remained, without attempting to seat himself, gracefully leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece. Never had Clémence been so strongly impressed with admiration at the noble and prepossessing appearance of the prince; never had his voice sounded more gentle or sweet upon her ear. Fully understanding how painful it must be to the marquise to open the conversation, Rodolph at once proceeded to the main point by observing,—

"You have been, madame, the victim of a base and treacherous action. A cowardly and dishonourable disclosure on the part of the Countess Macgregor has well-nigh effected irremediable mischief."

"Is it, indeed, so?" exclaimed Clémence, painfully surprised; "then my presentiments were not ill-founded! And by what means did your royal highness discover this?"

"Last night, at the ball given by the Countess C * * *, I discovered this infamous secret. I was sitting in a lone part of the 'Winter Garden,' when Countess Sarah and her brother, unconscious that a mass of verdure alone concealed me from them, while it enabled me to hear each word they spoke, began conversing freely upon their own projects, and the snare they had spread for you. Anxious to warn you of the danger with which you were threatened, I hastened to Madame de Nerval's ball, hoping to meet you there, but you did not appear. To write and direct my letter here was to incur the risk of its falling into the hands of the marquis, whose suspicions were already aroused by your treacherous friend; and I therefore preferred awaiting your arrival in the Rue du Temple, that I might unfold to you the perfidy of Countess Macgregor. Let me hope you will pardon my thus long dwelling on a subject which must be so painful to you. And, but for the few lines you were kind enough to write, never would my lips have in any way reverted to it."

After a momentary silence, Madame d'Harville said to Rodolph,—

"There is but one way, my lord, in which I can prove to you my gratitude for your late generous conduct. It is to confess to you that which I have never revealed to a human being. What I have to say will

not exculpate me in your estimation, but it will, perhaps, enable you to make some allowances for my imprudence."

"Candidly speaking, madam," said Rodolph, smiling, "my position as regards you is a very embarrassing one."

Clémence, astonished at the almost jesting tone in which he spoke, looked at Rodolph with extreme surprise, while she said, "How so, my lord?"

"Thanks to a circumstance you are doubtless acquainted with, I am obliged to assume the grave airs of a Mentor touching an incident which, since you have so happily escaped the vile snare laid for you by Countess Sarah, scarcely merits being treated with so much importance. But," continued Rodolph, with a slight shade of gentle and affectionate earnestness, "your husband and myself are almost as brothers; and, before our time, our fathers had vowed the sincerest friendship for each other. I have, therefore, a double motive in most warmly congratulating you on having secured the peace and happiness of your husband!"

"And it is from my knowledge of the high regard and esteem with which you honour M. d'Harville, that I have determined upon revealing the whole truth, as well as to explain myself relative to an *interest* which must appear to you as ill-chosen and unworthy as it now seems to me. I wish also to clear up that part of my conduct which bears an injurious appearance against the tranquillity and honour of him your highness styles 'almost a brother.'"

"Believe me, madame, I shall at all times be most proud and happy to receive the smallest proof of your confidence. Yet permit me to say, as regards the *interest* you speak of, that I am perfectly aware it originated as much in sincere pity as from the constant importunities of

Countess Sarah Macgregor, who had her own reasons for seeking to injure you. And I also know equally well that you long hesitated ere you could make up your mind to take the step you now so much regret."

Clémence looked at the prince with surprise.

"You seem astonished! Well, that you may not fancy I dabble in witchcraft, some of these days I will tell you all about it," said Rodolph, smiling. "But your husband is perfectly tranquillised, is he not?"

"Yes, my lord," said Clémence, looking down in much confusion; "and it is most painful to me to hear him asking my pardon for having ever suspected me, and then eulogising my modest silence respecting my good deeds."

"Nay, do not chide an illusion which renders him so happy. On the contrary, endeavour to maintain the innocent deception. Were it not forbidden to treat your late adventure lightly, and had not you, madame, been so much involved in it, I would say that a woman never appears more charming in the eyes of her husband than when she has some fault to conceal. It is inconceivable how many little cajoleries, and what winning smiles, are employed to ease a troubled conscience. When I was *young*," added Rodolph, smiling, "I always, in spite of myself, mistrusted any unusual marks of tenderness. And, by the same rule, I can say of myself, that I never felt more disposed to appear in an amiable light than when I was conscious of requiring forgiveness. So, directly I perceived a more than ordinary anxiety to please and gratify me, I was very sure (judging by my own conduct) to ascribe it to some little peccadillo that needed overlooking and pardoning."

The light tone with which Rodolph continued to discuss an affair which might have been attended with circumstances so fearful, at first excited Madame d'Harville's wonder; but she quickly perceived that the prince, beneath this outward appearance of trifling, sought to conceal, or at least lessen, the importance of the service he had rendered her. And, profoundly touched with his delicacy, she said,—

"I comprehend your generous meaning, my lord; and you are fully at liberty to jest and forget as much as you like the peril from which you have preserved me. But that which I have to relate to you is of so grave, so serious, and mournful a nature—is so closely connected with the events of this morning—and your advice may so greatly benefit me—that I beseech you to remember that to you I owe both my honour and my life: yes, my lord—my life! My husband was armed; and he has owned, in the excess of his repentance, that it was his intention to have killed me, had his suspicions proved correct."

"Great God!" exclaimed Rodolph, with emotion.

"And he would have been justified in so doing," rejoined Madame d'Harville, bitterly.

"I beseech you, madame," said Rodolph,—and this time he spoke with deep seriousness,—"I beseech you to be assured I am incapable of being careless or indifferent to any matter in which you are concerned. If I seemed but now to jest, it was but to make you think less of a circumstance which has already occasioned you so much pain. But now, madame, you may command my most solemn attention. Since you

honour me by saying my advice may be useful, I listen most anxiously and eagerly."

"You can, indeed, counsel me most beneficially, my lord. But, before I explain to you my reasons for seeking your aid, I must say a few words concerning a period of which you are ignorant—I mean the years which preceded my marriage with M. d'Harville."

Rodolph bowed, and Clémence continued:—

"At sixteen years of age I lost my mother (and here a tear stole down the fair cheek of Madame d'Harville). I cannot attempt to describe how much I adored that beloved parent. Imagine, my lord, the very personification of all earthly goodness. Her fondness for me was excessive, and appeared her only consolation amid the many bitter sorrows she had to endure. Caring but little for what is styled the world, with delicate health, and a natural predilection for sedentary occupation, her great delight had been in attending solely to my education, and her ample store of solid and varied knowledge well fitted her for the task. Conceive, my lord, her astonishment and mine when, in my sixteenth year, my dear preceptress considered my education nearly completed, my father—making the feeble health of my mother a pretext—announced to us that a young and accomplished widow, whose misfortunes rendered her justly interesting, would henceforward be charged with finishing what my dear parent had begun. My mother at first resolutely refused obedience to my father's command, while I in vain besought him not to interpose a stranger's authority between myself and my beloved mother. He was inexorable alike to our tears and prayers, and Madame Roland, who stated herself to be the widow of a colonel who had died in India, came to take up her abode with us, in the character of governess to myself."

"What! the same Madame Roland your father married almost immediately after the death of your mother?"

"The same, my lord."

"Was she, then, very beautiful?"

"Tolerably so—nothing more."

"Clever—witty—perhaps?"

"She was a clever dissembler—a skilful manœuvrer; her talent went no higher. She might be about five-and-twenty years of age, with extremely light hair and nearly white eyelashes; her eyes were large, round, and a clear blue; the expression of her countenance was humble and gentle; and while her outward manner was attentive, even to servility, her real disposition was as perfidious as it was unfeeling."

"And what were her acquirements?"

"Positively none at all, my lord; and I cannot conceive how my father, who until then had been so completely a slave to the dictates of worldly propriety, did not reflect that the utter incapacity of this woman must shamefully proclaim the real cause of her being in the house. My mother earnestly pointed out to him the extreme ignorance of Madame Roland; he, however, merely replied, in a tone which admitted of no further argument, that, competent or otherwise, the young and interesting widow should retain the situation in his establishment in which he had placed her. This I heard subsequently. From that instant my poor mother comprehended the whole affair, over which she deeply grieved;

regretting less, I fancy, her husband's infidelity than the domestic unhappiness which would result from so indecorous a *liaison*, the account of which she feared might reach my ears."

"But, even so far as his foolish passion was concerned, it seems to me that your father acted very unwisely in introducing this woman into his house."

Madame Roland.

"And you would be still more at a loss to understand his conduct if you had but known the extreme formality and circumspection of his character. Nothing could ever have induced him thus to trample under foot all the established rules of society but the unbounded influence of Madame Roland,—an influence she exercised with so much the more certainty as she veiled her designs under the mask of the most passionate love for him."

"But what was your father's age then?"

"About sixty."

"And he really credited the professions of love made by so much younger a woman?"

"My father had been in his time one of the most fashionable and admired men of the day. And Madame Roland, either following the suggestions of her own artful mind or urged on by the counsels of others, who could countenance much more ——"

"Counsel such a person!"

"I will tell you, my lord. Imagining that a man whose reputation for gallantry had always stood high in the world would, as he advanced in years, be more easily delighted than another by being flattered upon his personal advantages, and more credulously receive such compliments as served to recall those days most soothing to his vanity to remember, well, my lord, incredible as it may appear, this woman began to flatter my poor misguided father upon the graceful *tournure* of his features and the inimitable elegance of his shape. And he in his sixtieth year! Strange

as you may consider it, spite of the excellent sense with which my father was endowed, he fell blindly into the snare, coarse and vulgar as it was. Such was—such still is, I doubt not, the secret of the unbounded influence this woman obtained over him. And really, my lord, spite of my present disinclination for mirth, I can scarcely restrain a smile at the recollection of having frequently, before my marriage, heard Madame Roland assert and maintain that what she styled *real maturity* was the finest portion of

a person's existence, and that this *maturity* never began until about the fifty-fifth or sixtieth year of one's age."

"I suppose that happened to be your father's age?"

"Precisely so, my lord! Then, and then only, according to Madame Roland, had the understanding, combined with experience, attained their full developement: then only could a man, occupying a distinguished position in the world, enjoy the consideration to which he was entitled; at that period only were the *tout-ensemble* of his countenance, and the exquisite grace of his manners, in their highest perfection; the physiognomy offering at this delightful epoch of a man's life a heavenly mixture of winning serenity and gentle gravity. Then the slight tinge of melancholy, caused by the many recollections of past deceit experience is fain to look back upon, completes the irresistible charm of *real maturity;* unappreciable (Madame Roland hastily added) except by women with head and heart sufficiently good to despise the youthful frivolity of a poor, inexperienced forty years, when the character and countenance can scarcely be called formed, and when *good* taste turns away from the boyish folly of such an immature season of life, and seeks the fine, majestic features impressed with the sublime and poetic expression resulting from a sixty years' study of the vast book of human existence."

Rodolph could not restrain smiling at the powerful irony with which Madame d'Harville sketched the portrait of her mother-in-law.

"There is one thing," said he to the marquise, "for which I cannot forgive ridiculous people."

"What is that, my lord?"

"The being also wicked; which prevents our being able to laugh at them as much as they deserve."

"They probably calculate upon that available advantage," replied Clémence.

"Indeed, it is very probable, though equally lamentable, for, if it were not for the recollection of all the pain Madame Roland has occasioned you, I could be highly diverted with her system of *real maturity* as opposed to the insipidity of mere boys of *only* forty years of age, who, according to her assertion, would be scarcely out of their *leading-strings*, as our grandfathers and grandmothers would say."

"What principally excited my aversion for her was the shamefulness of her conduct towards my dear mother, and the unfortunately over-zealous part she took in my marriage," said the marquise, after a moment's pause.

Rodolph looked at her with much surprise.

"Nay, my lord," said Clémence, in a firm, though gentle tone, "I well remember that M. d'Harville is *your* friend and my husband. I know perfectly the grave importance of the words I have just uttered: hereafter you yourself shall admit the justice of them. But to return to Madame Roland, who was now, spite of her acknowledged incapacity, established as my instructress: my mother had a long and most painful altercation with my father on the subject, which drew down on us his extreme displeasure, and from that period my mother and myself remained secluded in our apartments, while Madame Roland, in quality of my governess, directed the whole household, and almost publicly did the honours of the mansion."

"What must your mother have suffered!"

"She did indeed, my lord; but her sorrow was less for herself than me, whose future destiny might be so deeply affected by the introduction of this woman. Her health, always delicate, became daily weaker, and she fell seriously ill. It chanced, most unfortunately, that our family doctor, M. Sorbier, in whom she had the highest confidence, died about this period, to my mother's extreme regret. Madame Roland immediately urged my father to place my mother's case in the hands of an Italian doctor, a particular friend of her own, and whom she described as possessing a more than ordinary skill in the treatment of diseases. Thanks to her importunities, my father, who had himself consulted him in trifling maladies, and found no cause to be dissatisfied, proposed him to my mother, who, alas! raised no objection. And this man it was who attended upon her during her last illness."

Tears filled the eyes of Madame d'Harville as she uttered these words.

"I am ashamed to confess my weakness, my lord," added she; "but, for the simple reason of this doctor having been appointed at the suggestion of Madame Roland, he inspired me (and at that time without any cause) with the most involuntary repugnance, and it was with the most painful misgivings I saw him established in my mother's confidence. Still, as regarded his knowledge of his profession, Doctor Polidori ——"

"What do I hear?" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Are you indisposed, my lord?" inquired Clémence, struck with the sudden expression the prince's countenance had assumed.

"No, no!" said Rodolph, as though unconscious of the presence of Madame d'Harville, "no, I must be mistaken. Five or six years must have elapsed since all this occurred, while I am informed that it is not more than two years since Polidori came to Paris, and then under a feigned name. He it was I saw yesterday—I am sure of it—the quack-

dentist Bradamanti and Polidori are one and the same. Still 'tis singular; *two* doctors of the same name*—what a strange rencontre!"

"Madame," said Rodolph, turning to Madame d'Harville, whose astonishment at his preoccupation still increased, "we will, if you please, compare notes as to this Italian. What age was he?"

"About fifty."

"And his appearance—his countenance?"

"Most sinister. Never shall I forget his clear, piercing, *green* eye, and his nose curved like the bill of an eagle."

"'Tis he—'tis he himself!" exclaimed Rodolph. "And do you think, madame, that the Doctor Polidori you were describing is still in Paris?"

"That I cannot tell you, my lord. He quitted Paris about a year after my father's marriage. A lady of my acquaintance, who at this period also employed the Italian as her medical adviser—this lady, Madame de Lucenay ——"

"La Duchesse de Lucenay?" interrupted Rodolph.

"Yes, my lord. But why this surprise?"

"Permit me to be silent on that subject. But, at the time of which you speak, what did Madame de Lucenay tell you of this man?"

"She said that he travelled much after quitting Paris, and that she often received from him very clever and amusing letters, descriptive of the various places he visited. Now I recollect, that about a month ago, happening to ask Madame de Lucenay whether she had heard lately from M. Polidori, she replied, with an embarrassed manner, 'that nothing had been heard of or concerning him for some time; that no one knew what had become of him; and that by many he was supposed to be dead.'"

"Strange, indeed," said Rodolph, recalling the recent visit of Madame de Lucenay to the charlatan Bradamanti.

"You know this man, then, my lord?"

"Unfortunately for myself, I do; but let me beseech you to continue your recital; hereafter I will give you an insight into the history of this Polidori."

"Do you mean the doctor?"

"Say, rather, the wretch stained with the most atrocious crimes."

"Crimes!" cried Madame d'Harville, in alarm; "can it be possible, the man whom Madame Roland so highly extolled, and into whose hands my poor mother was delivered, was guilty of *crimes?* Alas, my dear parent lingered but a very short time after she passed into his care! Ah, my lord, my presentiments have not deceived me!"

"Your presentiments?"

"Oh, yes! I was telling you just now of the invincible antipathy I felt for this man from the circumstance of his having been introduced among us by Madame Roland; but I did not tell you all, my lord."

"How so?"

"I was fearful lest the bitterness of my own griefs should make me guilty of injustice towards an innocent person; but now, my lord, you shall know every thing. My mother had lain dangerously ill about five days,

* We must remind the reader, that Polidori was a doctor of some eminence when he undertook the education of Rodolph.

I had always watched beside her, night as well as day. One evening, that I felt much oppressed with confinement and fatigue, I went to breathe the fresh air on the terrace of the garden: after remaining about a quarter of an hour, I was returning by a long and obscure gallery; by a faint light which streamed from the apartment of Madame Roland I saw M. Polidori quit the room, accompanied by the mistress of the chamber. Being in the shadow, they did not perceive me, Madame Roland spoke some words to the doctor, but in so low a tone I could not catch them; the doctor's answer was given in a louder key, and consisted only of these words, '*The day after to-morrow;*' and, when Madame Roland seemed to urge him, still in so low a voice as to prevent the words reaching me, he replied, with singular emphasis, '*The day after to-morrow, I tell you—the day after to-morrow.*'"

"What could those words mean?"

"What did they mean? Alas! alas! my lord, it was on the Wednesday evening I heard M. Polidori say '*The day after to-morrow;*' on the Friday my mother was a corpse!"

"Horrible, indeed!"

"After this mournful event I was consigned to the care of a relation, who, forgetful of the afflicted state of my mind, as well as tender age, told me, without reserve or consideration of the consequences, what powerful reasons there were for my hating Madame Roland, and fully enlightened me as to the ambitious projects entertained by this woman: full well I could then imagine all my poor mother must have endured. I thought my heart would break the first time I again saw my father, which was upon the occasion of his coming to fetch me from the house of my relation to take me into Normandy, where we were to pass the first months of our mourning. During the journey he informed me, without the least embarrassment, and as though it had been the most natural thing in the world, that, out of regard for himself and me, madame had kindly consented to take the command of the establishment, and to act as my guide and friend. On arriving at *Aubiers* (so was my father's estate called), the first object we beheld was Madame Roland, who had established herself here on the very day of my mother's death. Spite of her modest, gentle manner, her countenance betrayed an ill-disguised triumph; never shall I forget the look, at once ironical and spiteful, she cast on me as I descended the carriage; it seemed to say, 'I am mistress here,—'tis you who are the intruder.' A fresh grief awaited me: whether from an inexcusable want of proper judgment or unpardonable assurance, this woman occupied the apartment which had been my mother's: in my just indignation I loudly complained to my father of this unpleasant forgetfulness of my rights as well as wishes. He reprimanded me severely for making any remonstrance on the subject, adding, that it was needless for me either to feel or express surprise on the subject, as it was his desire I should habituate myself to consider Madame Roland in every respect as a second mother, and shew her a corresponding deference. I replied, that it would be a profanation to that sacred name to act as he commanded; and, to his extreme wrath, I never allowed any opportunity to escape by which I could evince my deeply rooted aversion to Madame Roland. At times my father's rage knew no bounds, and bitterly would he reproach me in the presence of that woman for the coldness and ingratitude of my conduct

towards an angel, as he styled her, sent by Heaven for our consolation and happiness. 'Let me entreat of you to speak for yourself alone,' said

I, one day, quite wearied with the hypocritical conduct of Madame Roland and my father's blind infatuation. The harshness and unreasonableness of his conduct became at last quite unendurable; while Madame Roland, with the honeyed words of feigned affection, would artfully intercede for me, because she well knew by so doing she should only increase the storm she had raised. 'You must make some allowances for Clémence,' she would say; 'the sorrow she experiences for the excellent parent we all deplore is so natural, and even praiseworthy, that you should respect her just grief, and pity her for her unfounded suspicions.' 'You hear her! you hear her!' would my father exclaim, pointing with mingled triumph and admiration to the accomplished hypocrite; 'what angelic goodness! what enchanting nobleness and generosity! Instantly entreat her pardon for the unworthiness of your conduct.' 'Never!' I used to reply; 'the spirit of my angel mother, who now beholds me, would be pained to witness

such a degradation in her child;' and, bursting with grief and mortification, I would fly to my own chamber, leaving my father to dry the tears, and calm the ruffled feelings, of the woman I despised and hated. You will, I hope, excuse me, my lord, for dwelling so long and so minutely on all my early troubles, but it is only by so doing I can accurately describe to you the sort of life I led at that period."

"I can enter fully into the painful subject; yet how often have the same scenes been enacted in other families, and still, it is much to be feared, will they be repeated till the end of time. But in what capacity did your father introduce Madame Roland to the neighbourhood?"

"As my instructress and his *friend*, and she was estimated accordingly."

"I need scarcely inquire whether he shared in the solitude to which her questionable character condemned the lady?"

"With the exception of some few and unavoidable visits, she saw no one. My father, guided by his passion, or influenced by Madame Roland, threw off his mourning for my mother ere he had worn it three months, under the plea that the sable garb continually reminded him of his loss, and prevented him from regaining his lost tranquillity. His manners to me daily became colder and more estranged, while his perfect indifference concerning me allowed a degree of liberty almost incredible in a person of my age. I met him only at breakfast, after which he returned to his study with Madame Roland, who acted as his secretary, read and answered all his letters, &c.; that completed, they either walked or drove out together, returning only an hour before dinner, against which, Madame Roland would array herself in an elegant and well-chosen evening dress; while my father would make a most studiously elaborate toilette, as uncalled for as ill adapted to his time of life. Occasionally, after dinner, he received a few persons he could not avoid asking to his house, when he would play at tric-trac with Madame Roland until ten o'clock, at which hour he

would offer his arm to conduct her to my mother's apartment, and return to his guests. As for myself, I had unrestrained permission to go where I pleased throughout the whole day. Attended by a servant, I used to take long rides in the extensive woods surrounding the château, and when, as occasionally happened, I felt my spirits unequal to appearing at the dinner-table, not the slightest inquiry was ever made after me, or my absence noticed."

"What singular neglect and forgetfulness!"

"Having accidentally encountered one of our neighbours during several successive days of my excursions in the woods, I gave up riding there, and confined myself entirely to the park."

"And how did this infamous woman conduct herself towards you when alone?"

"She shunned all occasions of being with me as sedulously as I avoided her; but once that we were unexpectedly *tête-à-tête* with each other, and that she was reproaching me for some severe words I had spoken the preceding evening, she said, coldly, 'Have a care: you cannot contend against my power; any such attempt will bring down certain ruin on your head.' 'As it did upon that of my mother,' answered I. 'It is a pity, madame, you have not M. Polidori by your side, to announce to you that your vengeance can be satisfied—*the day after to-morrow.*'"

"And what reply did she make when you thus recalled those fearful words?"

"She changed colour rapidly, her features were almost convulsed, then, by a strong effort conquering her emotion, she angrily demanded what I meant by the expression? 'Ask your own heart, madame,' answered I, 'in the solitude of your chamber inquire of yourself to what I allude: your conscience will find a ready explanation.' Shortly after that, a scene occurred which for ever sealed my destiny.

"Among a great number of family portraits which graced the walls of the *salon* in which we usually spent the evening was that of my mother. One day I observed it had been removed from its accustomed place. Two neighbours had dined with us; one of them, a M. Dorval, a country lawyer, had always expressed the utmost veneration and respect for my mother. When we reached the *salon* after dinner, I inquired of my father what had become of my dear mother's picture? 'Cease!' cried my father, significantly pointing to our guests, as though intimating his desire that they should not hear any discussion on the subject; 'the reason of the picture being taken away is that the sight of it continually reminded me of the heavy loss I have sustained, and so prevented my regaining my usual calmness and peace of mind.' 'And where is the portrait at present?' inquired I. Turning towards Madame Roland, with an impatient and uneasy air, he said, 'Where has the picture been put?' 'In the lumber-room,' replied she, casting on me a glance of defiance, evidently under the impression that the presence of witnesses would prevent me from proceeding further in the matter. 'I can easily believe, madame,' cried I, indignantly, 'that the recollection of my mother must have been painful to *you*; but that was not a sufficient reason for banishing from the walls the likeness of her who, when you were in want and misery, kindly and charitably afforded you the shelter of her roof.'"

"Excellent!" exclaimed Rodolph; "yours was, indeed, a stinging and a just reproach."

"'Mademoiselle,' cried my father, 'you forget that this lady *has* watched, and still continues to preside, with maternal solicitude over your education: you also seem to banish from your recollection the very high esteem and respect you are aware *I* entertain for her; and, since you allow yourself thus to attack her before strangers, you will permit me to tell you that, in my opinion, the charge of ingratitude lies at the door of her who, overlooking the tender cares she has received, presumes to reproach a person, deserving of the utmost interest and respect, with misfortunes and calamities she so nobly sustained.' 'I cannot venture to discuss the subject with *you*, my dear father,' said I, submissively. 'Perhaps, then, mademoiselle, you will favour me with your polite arguments in favour of rudeness and unmerited abuse,' cried Madame Roland, carried away by rage into a neglect of her usual caution and prudence—'perhaps you will permit me to assert that, so far from owing the slightest obligation to your mother, I have nothing to remember but the constant coldness and dislike she invariably manifested towards me, fully expressive of the disgust and displeasure with which my residence in the house inspired her.' 'Forbear, madame!' exclaimed I, interrupting her. 'Out of respect for my father, if not to spare your own blushes, cease such shameful confessions as the one you have just made, or you will make even me regret having exposed you to so humiliating a disclosure.'"

"Better and better!" cried Rodolph; "this was, indeed, cutting with a two-edged sword. Pray go on. And what said this woman?"

"By a very hackneyed, though convenient expedient, Madame Roland contrived to end a scene in which she felt she was likely to have the worst. With a sudden cry she threw herself into a chair, and very naturally imitated a fainting-fit. Thanks to this incident, the two visitors quitted the room in search of restoratives; while I retired to my own apartment, leaving my father hanging in deep anxiety over the wicked cause of all this confusion."

"Doubtless your next interview with your father must have been a stormy one."

"He came to me next morning, and, without further preamble, addressed me as follows: 'In order to prevent a recurrence of the disgraceful scene of yesterday, I think proper to inform you that, immediately that decency permits both you and myself to throw off our mourning, it is my intention to celebrate my marriage with Madame Roland, which will compel you to treat her with the respect and deference due to *my wife*. For certain reasons, it is expedient you should marry before me: you will have as a dowry your mother's fortune, amounting to more than a million francs. From this very day I shall take the necessary steps to form a suitable match for you, and for that purpose I shall accept one of the many offers I have received for your hand.' After this conversation, I lived more alone than ever, never meeting my father except at meal-times, which generally passed off in the utmost silence. So really dull and lonely was my present existence, that I only waited for my father to propose any suitor he might approve of, to accept him with perfect willingness. Madame Roland, having relinquished all further ill-natured remarks upon the memory of my deceased parent, indemnified herself by inflicting on me the continual pain of seeing her appropriate to herself the various trifles my dear mother had exclusively made use of. Her easy chair, embroidery-frame, the books which composed her private library, even a screen I myself had embroidered for her, and in the centre of which were our united ciphers: this woman laid her sacrilegious hands on all the elegant articles with which my mother's taste and my affection had ornamented her apartments."

"I can well imagine all the horror these profanations must have caused you."

"Still, great as were my sufferings, the state of loneliness in which I found myself rendered them even greater."

"And you had no one, no person in whom you could confide?"

"No one; but at this time I received a touching proof of the interest my fate excited, and which might have opened my eyes to the dangers preparing for me. One of the two persons present during the scene with Madame Roland I so lately described was a M. Dorval, a worthy old notary, to whom my mother had rendered some signal service. By my father's orders, I never since then entered the *salon* when strangers were there; I had never, therefore, seen M. Dorval after the eventful day when I spoke so undisguisedly to Madame Roland: great, therefore, was my surprise to see him coming towards me one day, in the park, while I was taking my accustomed walk. 'Mademoiselle,' said he to me, with a mysterious air, 'I am fearful of being observed by your father; here is a letter—read it, and destroy it immediately—its contents are most important to you.' So saying, he disappeared as quickly as he came. In the letter he informed me that it was in agitation to marry me to the Marquis d'Harville, and that the match appeared in every respect eligible, inasmuch as every one concurred in bearing testimony to the many excellent qualities of M. d'Harville, who was young, rich, good-looking, and highly distinguished for his talents and mental attainments; yet that he families of two young ladies, with whom he had been on the point of

marriage, had abruptly broken off the matches. The notary added, that, although entirely ignorant of the cause of these ruptures, he still considered it his duty to apprise me of them, without in the slightest degree insinuating that they originated in any circumstance prejudicial to the high opinion entertained of M. d'Harville. The two young ladies alluded to were, one, the daughter of M. Beauregard, a peer of France; the other, of Lord Dudley. M. Dorval concluded by saying, that his motive in making the communication was because my father, in his extreme desire to conclude the marriage, did not appear to attach sufficient importance to the facts now detailed."

"Now you recall it to my recollection," said Rodolph, after some minutes spent in deep meditation on what he had just heard, "I remember that your husband, at intervals of nearly twelve months, told me of two marriages which had been broken off just as they were on the point of taking place, and ascribing their abrupt termination to a difficulty in arranging matters of a mere pecuniary nature."

Madame d'Harville smiled bitterly as she replied,—

"You shall know what those motives really were, my lord, very shortly. After reading the letter, so kindly intentioned on the part of the worthy notary, I felt both my uneasiness and curiosity rapidly increase. Who was D'Harville? my father had never mentioned him to me; in vain I ransacked my memory, I could not recollect ever to have heard the name. Soon, however, the current of my thoughts was directed into another channel by the abrupt departure of Madame Roland for Paris. Although the period of her absence was limited to eight days at the utmost, yet my father expressed the deepest grief at even this trifling separation from her: his temper became altogether soured, and his coldness towards me hourly increased; he even went so far as to reply, when one day I inquired after his health, 'I am ill—and all through you.' 'Through me?' exclaimed I. 'Assuredly, through you; you know full well how indispensable to my happiness is the company of Madame Roland, yet this incomparable woman, who has been so grossly insulted by you, has left me to undertake her present journey solely on your account.' This mark of *interest* on the part of Madame Roland filled me with the most lively apprehensions of evil, and a vague presentiment floated across my mind that my marriage was in some way or other mixed up with it. I must leave it to your imagination, my lord, to picture the delight of my father upon the return of my future mother-in-law. The next day he sent to desire my company; I found him alone with her. 'I have for some time,' said he, 'been thinking of establishing you in the world; in another month your mourning will have expired. To-morrow I expect M. d'Harville, a young man possessed of every requisite, both as to fortune and figure, to secure any woman's approbation; he is well looked upon in society, and is capable of securing the happiness of any lady he may seek in marriage. Now, having seen you, though accidentally, his choice has fallen on you. In fact, he is most anxious to obtain your hand. Every pecuniary arrangement is concluded. It therefore remains solely with yourself to be married ere the next six weeks have elapsed. If, on the contrary, from any capricious whim impossible for

me to foresee, you think fit to refuse the unlooked-for good offer now before you, it will in no respect alter my own plans, as my marriage will take place, according to my original intention, directly my mourning expires. And, in this latter case, I am bound to inform you, that your presence in my house will not be agreeable to me, unless I have your promise to treat *my wife* with the respect and tenderness

to which she is entitled.' 'I understand you,' replied I; 'whether I accept M. d'Harville or no, you will marry; and my only resource will then be to retire to the Convent of the Holy Heart?' 'It will,' answered he, coldly."

"His conduct now ceases to be classed under the term *weakness*," said Rodolph; "it assumes the form of positive cruelty."

"Shall I tell you, my lord, what has always prevented me from feeling the least resentment at my father's conduct? It is because I have always had a strong presentiment that he would one day pay dearly—too dearly, alas!—for his blind passion for Madame Roland. Thank Heaven, that evil day has not yet arrived!"

"And did you not mention to your father what the old notary had informed you of—the abrupt breaking off of the two marriages M. d'Harville had been on the point of contracting?"

"Indeed, I did, my lord. I signified to my father upon the occasion of the conversation I was relating to you a wish to speak with him *alone*, upon which Madame Roland abruptly rose and quitted the apartment. 'I have no objection to the union you propose with M. d'Harville,' said I; 'only, as I understand, he has twice been upon the point of marriage, and——' 'Enough—enough!' interrupted he, hastily. 'I know all about those two affairs, which were so abruptly broken off merely because matters of a pecuniary nature were not satisfactorily arranged; although, I am bound to assure you, that not the slightest shadow of blame was attributable to M. d'Harville. If that be your only objection, you may consider the match as concluded on, and yourself as married—ay, and happily, too!—for, spite of your conduct, my first wish is for your happiness.'"

"No doubt Madame Roland was delighted with your marriage?"

"Delighted? Yes, my lord," said Clémence, with bitterness. "She was, and well might be, delighted with this union, which was, in fact, of her effecting. She it was who had first suggested it to my father; she knew full well the real occasion of breaking off the marriages so nearly completed by M. d'Harville, and hence arose her exceeding anxiety for him to become my husband."

"What motive could she possibly have had?"

"She sought to avenge herself on me by condemning me to a life of wretchedness."

"But your father——"

"Deceived by Madame Roland, he fully and implicitly believed that interested motives alone had set aside the two former marriages of M. d'Harville."

"What a horrible scheme! But what was this mysterious reason?"

"You shall know shortly. Well, M. d'Harville arrived at Aubiers, and, I confess, I was much pleased with his appearance, manners, and cultivated mind. He seemed very amiable and kind, though somewhat melancholy. I remarked in him a contradiction which charmed and astonished me at the same time. His personal and mental advantages were considerable, his fortune princely, and his birth illustrious; yet, at times, the expression of his countenance would change, from a firm and manly energy and decision of purpose, to an almost timid, shrinking look, as though he feared even his own self; then an utter dejection of spirits and exhaustion would ensue. There was, at these strangely contrasted periods, such a look of deprecating humility, such an appearance of conscious wrong, as touched me deeply, and won my pity to a great extent. I admired greatly the kindness of manner he ever evinced to an old

servant—a valet-de-chambre, who had been about him from his birth—and who alone was suffered to attend upon his master now he had

reached man's estate. Shortly after M. d'Harville's arrival he remained for two days secluded in his apartment. My father wished to visit him; but the old servant alluded to objected, stating that his master had so violent a headach, he could receive no one. When M. d'Harville emerged from his chamber, he was excessively pale, and looked extremely ill. He afterwards appeared to experience a sort of impatience and uneasiness when any reference was made to his temporary indisposition. In proportion as I became better acquainted with M. d'Harville, I discovered that, on many points, a singular similarity of taste existed between us. He had so much to be proud of, and so many reasons for being happy, that his excessive and shrinking modesty struck me as something more than admirable. The day for our marriage being fixed, he seemed to delight in anticipating every wish I could form for the future, and, when sometimes I alluded to the deep melancholy which at times possessed him, and begged to know the cause, he would speak of his deceased parents, and of the delight it would have afforded them to

see him married, to their hearts' dearest wish, to one so justly approved both by his own judgment and affections, I could not well find fault with reasons so complimentary to myself. M. d'Harville easily guessed the terms on which I must have been living with my father and Madame Roland, although the former, delighted at my marriage, which would serve as a plea for accelerating his own, had latterly treated me with excessive tenderness. In some of our conversations, M. d'Harville, with infinite tact and good feeling, explained to me that his regard was considerably heightened by the knowledge of all I had suffered since my dear mother's death. I thought it my duty to hint to him, at such a time, that, as my father was about to marry again, it might very possibly affect the property I might be expected to inherit. He would not even permit me to proceed, but most effectually convinced me of his own utterly disinterested motives in seeking my hand. I could not but think that the families, who had so abruptly broken off his former projected alliances, must have been very unreasonable or avaricious people if they made pecuniary matters a stumbling-block with one so generous, easy, and liberal as M. d'Harville."

"And, such as you describe him, so have I always found him," cried Rodolph; "all heart, disinterestedness, and delicacy! But did you never speak to him of the marriages so hastily broken off?"

"I will confess to you, my lord, that the question was several times on my lips: but, when I recollected the sensitiveness of his nature, I feared to pain him by questions, which might, at any rate, have wounded his self-love, or taxed his honour to reply to truly. The nearer the day fixed for our marriage approached, the more delighted did M. d'Harville appear. Yet I several times detected him absorbed in the most perfect dejection, the deepest melancholy. One day, in particular, I caught his eyes fixed on me with a settled gaze, as though resolving to confide to me some important secret he yet could not bring himself to reveal. I perceived a large tear trickle slowly down his cheek, as though wrung from his very heart. The recollection of his two former prospects of marriage, so suddenly destroyed, rose to my mind; and, I confess, I almost felt afraid to proceed. A vague presentiment whispered within me that the happiness of my whole life was at stake—perhaps perilled for ever. But then, on the other hand, such was my eager desire to quit my father's house, that I turned a deaf ear to every suggestion of evil arising from my union with M. d'Harville."

"And did M. d'Harville make you no voluntary confession?"

"Not any. When I inquired the cause of his continual fits of melancholy, he would answer, 'Pray do not heed it. But I am always most sad when most happy!' These words, pronounced in the kindest and most touching manner, reassured me a little. And how, indeed, was it possible, when his voice would quiver with emotion, and his eyes fill with tears, to manifest any further suspicion, by repeating my questions as to the *past*, when it was with the future only I had any business? The persons appointed to witness the contract on the part of M. d'Harville, M. de Lucenay and M. de Saint-Rémy, arrived at Aubiers some days previous to the marriage; my nearest relations alone were invited.

Immediately after the conclusion of the ceremony, we were to depart for Paris; and it is true I felt for M. d'Harville none of that love with which a young wife ought to regard the man she vows her future life to, but I admired and respected his character and disposition, and, but for the disastrous events which followed this fatal union, a more tender feeling could doubtless soon have attached me to him. Well, we were married."

At these words, Madame d'Harville turned rather pale, and her resolution appeared to forsake her. After a pause, she resumed,—

" Immediately after the ceremony, my father embraced me tenderly, as did Madame Roland also: before so many persons I could not avoid the display of this fresh exhibition of hypocrisy. With her dry and white hand she squeezed mine so hard as to pain me, and said, in a whisper, and in a tone as gentle as it was perfidious, these words, which I never can forget, 'Think of me sometimes in the midst of your bliss, *for it was I who arranged your marriage.*' Alas, I was far from comprehending

at that moment the full force of those words! Our marriage took place at eleven o'clock, and we immediately entered our carriage, followed by my waiting-woman and the old valet-de-chambre of M. d'Harville's, and we travelled so rapidly that we reached Paris before ten o'clock in the evening. I should have been surprised at the silence and melancholy of M. d'Harville had I not known that he had what he termed his *happy sadness.* I was myself painfully disturbed; I was returning to Paris for the first time since my mother's death; I arrived there alone with my husband, whom I had hardly known more than six weeks, and who, up to the evening before, had not addressed a word to me but what was marked

by respectful formality. Men, however well bred, do not think sufficiently of the fear which the sudden change in their tone and manners occasions to a young female as soon as she belongs to them; they do not reflect that a youthful maiden cannot in a few hours forget all her timidity and virgin scruples."

"Nothing is to me more barbarous than this system of carrying off a young female as soon as the wedding ceremony is over,—a ceremony which ought to consecrate the right and duty to employ still more every tenderness of love and effort to render mutual affection still stronger and more endearing."

"You will imagine, monseigneur, the indefinable alarm with which I found myself in Paris—in the city in which my mother had died hardly a year before. We reached the Hôtel d'Harville ——"

The emotion of the young lady redoubled, her cheeks were flushed with scarlet, and she added, in a voice scarcely intelligible,—

"You must know all; if not, I shall appear too contemptible in your eyes. Well, then," she resumed, with desperate resolution, "I was led to my apartment and left there alone; after an hour M. d'Harville joined me there, I was weeping bitterly. My husband came towards me, and was about to take my arm, when he fell at my feet in agony. He could not hear my voice, his countenance was spasmodic with fearful convulsions, his eyes rolled in their orbits with a rapidity that appalled me, his contorted mouth was filled with blood and foam, and his hand grasped me with inconceivable force. I made a desperate effort, and his stiffened fingers at length unclapsed from my wrist, and I fainted at the moment when M. d'Harville was struggling in the paroxysm of this horrible attack. This was my wedding night, my lord,—this was the vengeance of Madame Roland!"

"Unhappy woman!" said Rodolph, overwhelmed. "I understand—an epileptic. Ah, 'tis horrible!"

"And that is not all," added Clémence, in a voice almost choked by emotion; "my child, my angel girl, she has inherited this frightful malady."

"Your daughter? she! What! her paleness—her weakness——"

"Is, I dread to believe, hereditary; and the physicians think, therefore, that it is incurable."

Madame d'Harville hid her face in her hands; overcome by this painful disclosure, she had not courage to add another word. Rodolph also remained silent. His mind recoiled affrighted from the terrible mysteries of this night. He pictured to himself the young maiden, already sad, in consequence of her return to the city in which her mother had died, arriving at a strange house, alone with a man for whom she felt an interest and esteem, but not love, nor any of those sentiments which enchant the mind, none of the engrossing feeling which removes the chaste alarms of a woman in the participation of a lawful and reciprocal affection. No, no; on the contrary, Clémence arrived agitated and distressed, with depressed spirits and tearful eyes. She was, however, resolved on resignation and the fulfilment of duty, when, instead of listening to language full of devotion, love, and tenderness, which would compensate

for the sorrowful feelings which were uppermost in her mind, she sees convulsed at her feet a stricken man, who twists, and foams, and shrieks, in the hideous convulsions of one of the most fearful infirmities with which a man can be incurably smitten! This is not all: his child, poor little innocent angel! is also withered from her birth. These sad and painful avowals excited bitter reflections in Rodolph's mind. "Such," said he, "is the law of the land. A young, handsome, and pure girl, the confiding and gentle victim of a shameful dissimulation, unites her destiny to that of a man tainted with an incurable malady—a fatal inheritance which he will assuredly transmit to his children. The unhappy wife discovers this horrid mystery. What can she do? Nothing —nothing but suffer and weep; nothing but endeavour to overcome her disgust and fright; nothing but pass her days in anguish, in indefinable and endless terror; nothing but seek, perhaps, culpable consolation without the desolate existence which has been created around her. Again," said Rodolph, "these strange laws sometimes produce horrible unions: fearful for humanity. In these laws, animals always appear superior to man in the care bestowed upon them; in the improvements that are studied for them; in the protection which encircles, the guarantees which attend them. Buy an animal, and, if an infirmity decried by the law is detected after the purchase, the sale is null and void. Indeed, what a shame, what a case of public injury would it be to compel a man to keep an animal which has a cough, is lame, or has lost an eye! Why it would be scandalous, criminal, unheard-of infamy! Only imagine being compelled to keep, and keep for ever, a mule with a cough, a horse that was blind, or an ass that was lame! What frightful consequences might not such injustice entail on the community! Therefore, no such bargains hold good, no words bind, no contract is valid: the omnipotent law unlooses all that was thus bound. But if it relates to a creature made after God's own image, if it respects a young girl who, in the full and innocent reliance on the good faith of a man, unites her lot with his, and wakes up in the company of an epileptic, an unhappy wretch stricken with a fearful malady, whose moral and physical consequences are immeasurably distressing, a malady which may throw disorder and aversion into a family, perpetuate a horrible disease, vitiate whole generations, yes, this law, so inexorable when lame, blind, or coughing animals are the consideration—this law, so singularly clear-sighted, which will not allow an unsound horse to increase the species—this law will not loosen the victim of a union such as we have described. These bonds are sacred, indissoluble: it is to offend God and man to break them. In truth," continued Rodolph, "men sometimes display a humility most shameful and an egotistical pride which is only execrable. He values himself at less than the beast which he protects by warranties which he refuses for himself; and he imposes on himself, makes sacred, and perpetuates his most distressing infirmities by putting them under the protection of the immutability of laws human and divine." Rodolph greatly blamed M. d'Harville, but he promised to himself to excuse him in the eyes of Clémence, although fully persuaded after her sad disclosure that the marquis was for ever alienated from her heart.

One thought led to another, and Rodolph said to himself, "I have kept aloof from a woman I love, and who, perhaps, already feels a secret inclination for me. Either from an attachment of heart or friendship, she has bestowed her honour—her life—for the sake of a fool whom she thought unhappy. If, instead of leaving her, I had paid her all sorts of attentions, love, and consideration, my name would have been such, that her reputation would not have received the slightest stain, the suspicions of her husband would never have been excited: whilst, now, she is all but at the mercy of such an ass as M. Charles Robert, who, I fear, will become the more indiscreet in proportion as he has the less right to be so. And then, too, who knows if, in spite of the dangers she has risked, the heart of Madame d'Harville will always remain free? Any return to her husband is henceforward impossible. Young, handsome, courted, with a disposition sympathising with all who suffer, what dangers, what shoals and quicksands, lie before her! For M. d'Harville, what anguish and what deep chagrin! At the same time, jealous of and in love with his wife, who cannot subdue the disgust and fright which he excited in her on their nuptials—what a lot is his!"

Clémence, with her forehead hidden by her hands, her eyes brimful of tears, and her cheek reddened by embarrassment, avoided Rodolph's look: such pain had the disclosure cost her.

"Ah, now," said Rodolph, after a long silence, "I can understand the cause of M. d'Harville's sadness, which I could not before account for. I can imagine his regrets ——"

"His regrets!" exclaimed Clémence; "say his remorse, monseigneur, if he have any, for never was such a crime more coolly meditated."

"A crime, madame?"

"What else is it, my lord, to bind to yourself in indissoluble bonds a young girl, who confides in your honour, when you are fatally stricken with a malady which inspires fear and horror? What else is it, to devote with certainty an unhappy child to similar misery? What forced M. d'Harville to make two victims? A blind, insensate passion? No; he found my birth, my fortune, and my person, to his taste. He wished to make a *convenient marriage*, because, doubtless, a bachelor's life wearied him."

"Madame, at least pity him."

"Pity him? If you wish pity, pray let it be bestowed on my child. Poor victim of this odious union, what nights and days have I passed near her! what tears have not her misfortunes wrung from me!"

"But her father suffers from the same unmerited afflictions."

"Yet it is that father who has condemned her to a sickly infancy, a withering youth, and, if she should survive, to a life of isolation and misery, for she will never marry. Ah, no, I love her too well to expose her to the chance of one day's weeping over her own offspring, similarly smitten, as I weep over her. I have suffered too much from treachery, to render myself guilty of, or an accomplice in, such wickedness!"

"You are right; the vengeance of your mother-in-law was really atrocious. But patience, and perhaps in your turn you will be avenged," said Rodolph, after a moment's reflection.

"What do you mean, my lord?" inquired Clémence, astonished at the change in his voice.

"I have generally had the satisfaction of seeing those whom I have known to be wicked most severely punished," he replied, in a voice that made Clémence shudder. "But the day after this unhappy event what did your husband say?"

"He confessed, with singular candour, that his two former marriages had been broken off in consequence of the families becoming acquainted with the secret of his fearful malady. Thus, then, after having been

twice rejected, he had the shameful, the unmanly courage, to drag a third poor victim into the abyss of misery the kind intervention of friends had preserved the others from. And this is what the world calls a gentleman and a man of honour!"

"For one so good, so full of pity to others, yours are harsh words."

"Because I feel I have been unworthily treated. M. d'Harville easily penetrated the girlish openness of my character: why, then, did he not trust to my sympathy and generosity of feeling, and tell me the whole truth?"

"Because you would have refused him."

"This very expression proves how guilty he was, and how treacherous was his conduct, if he really entertained the idea of my rejecting his hand if informed of the truth!"

"He loved you too well to incur the risk of losing you."

"No, no, my lord; had he really loved me, he would never have

sacrificed me to his selfish passion. Nay, so wretched was my position at that time, and such was my desire to quit my father's roof, that, had he been candid and explicit with me, it is more than probable he would have moved me to pity the species of misery he was condemned to endure, and to sympathise with one so cut off from the tender ties which sweeten life. I really believe, at this moment, that, touched by his open, manly confession, as well as interested for one labouring under so severe an infliction of the Almighty's hand, I should scarcely have had the courage to refuse him my hand; and, once aware of all I had undertaken, nothing should have deterred me from the full and conscientious discharge of every solemn duty towards him. But to compel this pity and interest, merely because he had me in his power, and to exact my consideration and sympathy, because unhappily I was his wife, and had sworn to obligations, the full force of which had been concealed from me, was at once the act of a coward and a wrong-judging mind. How could I hold myself bound to endure the heavy penalties of my unfortunate marriage, when my husband had trampled on every tie which binds an honourable mind? And now, my lord, you may form some little idea of my wedded life; you are now aware how shamefully I was deceived, and that, too, by the person in whose hands I unsuspectingly placed the future happiness of my whole existence. I had implicitly trusted in M. d'Harville, and he had most dishonourably and treacherously repaid my trustfulness with bitter and irremediable wrongs. The gentle, timid melancholy which had so greatly interested me in his favour, and which he attributed to pious recollections, was, in truth, only the workings of a conscience ill at ease, and the knowledge of his own incurable infirmity."

"Still, were he a stranger or an enemy, a heart so noble and generous as yours would pity such sufferings as he endures?"

"But can I calm those sufferings? If he could distinguish my voice, or if only a look of recognition answered my sorrowing glance! But no. Oh, my lord, it is impossible for such as have never seen them to form an idea of those frightful paroxysms, in which every sense is suspended, and the unfortunate sufferer merely recovers from his frenzy to fall into a sort of sullen dejection! When my dear child experiences one of these attacks, it almost breaks my heart to see her tender frame twisted, stiffened, and distorted, by the dreadful convulsions which accompany it. Still she is my own, my beloved infant, and, when I see her bitter agonies, my hatred and aversion to her father are increased an hundredfold. But, when my poor child becomes calmer, so does my irritation against my husband subside also; and then—ah, then—the natural tenderness of my heart makes my angry feelings give place to a species of sorrow and pity for him. Yet surely I did not marry at only seventeen years of age merely to experience the alternations of hatred and painful commiseration, and to weep over a frail and sickly infant, whom after all I may not be permitted to rear. And, as regards this beloved object of my incessant prayers, permit me, my lord, to anticipate a reproach, I doubtless deserve, and which you would be unwilling to make. My daughter, young as she is, is capable of interesting my affections and fully occupying my heart; but the love she inspires is so cruelly mixed with present anguish

and future apprehensions, that my tenderness for my child invariably ends in tears and bitter grief. When I am with her, my heart is torn

with agony, a heavy, crushing weight presses on my heart at the thoughts of her hopeless, suffering state. Not all the fondest devices of a mother's love can overcome a malady pronounced by all our faculty as incurable. Thus, then, by way of relief and refuge from the atmosphere of wretchedness which surrounded me, I had pictured to myself the possibility of finding calm and repose for my troubled spirit in an attachment, so vain, so empty, that —— But I have been deceived a second time, most unworthily deceived; and there is now nothing left for me but to resign myself to the gloom and misery of the life my husband's want of candour has entailed upon me. But tell me, my lord, is it such an existence as I was justified in expecting when I bestowed my hand on M. d'Harville? And am I alone to blame for those injuries, to avenge which my husband had this day determined to take my life? My fault was great, very great; and the more so, because the object I had selected was every way so unworthy, and leaves me the additional shame of having to blush for my choice. Happily for me, my lord, the conversation you overheard between the Countess Sarah and her brother on the subject of M. Charles Robert spares me much of the humiliation I should otherwise have

experienced in making this confession. I only venture to hope that, since listening to my relation, you may be induced to consider me as much an object of pity as I admit I am of blame."

"I cannot express to you, madame, how deeply your narrative has touched me. What gnawing grief, what hidden sorrows have you not been called upon to endure, from the death of your mother to the birth of your child! Who would ever believe such ills could reach one so envied, so admired, and so calculated to enjoy and impart happiness to others?"

"Oh, my lord, there are some sorrows so deep, so unapproachable, that for worlds we would not even have them suspected; and the severest increase of suffering would arise from the very doubt of our being the enviable creatures we are believed to be."

"You are right; nothing would be more painful than the question, openly expressed, 'Is she or he as happy as they seem to be?' Still, if there is any happiness in the knowledge, be assured you are not the only one who has to struggle with the fearful contrast between reality and that which the world believes."

"How so, my lord?"

"Because, in the eyes of all who know you, your husband is esteemed even happier than yourself, since he possesses one so rich in every good gift: and yet is not he also much to be pitied? Can there be a more miserable existence than the one he leads? He has acted unfairly and selfishly towards you, but has he not been bitterly punished? He loves you with a passion deep and sincere, worthy of you to have inspired, yet he knows that your only feeling towards him is insurmountable aversion and contempt. In his feeble, suffering child he beholds a constant reproach; nor is that all *he* is called upon to endure, jealousy also assails him with her nameless tortures."

"And how can I help that, my lord? By giving him no occasion for jealousy, you reply. And certainly you are right. But think you, because no other person would possess my love, it would any the more be his? He knows full well it would not. Since the fearful scene I related to you, we have lived entirely apart; while in the eyes of the world I have kept up every necessary appearance of married happiness. With the exception of yourself, my lord, I have never breathed a syllable of this fatal secret to mortal ears: thus, therefore, I venture to ask advice of you I could not solicit from any human being."

"And I, madame, can with truth assure you, that, if the trifling service I have rendered you be deemed worthy of notice, I hold myself a thousand times overpaid by the confidence you have reposed in me. But, since you deign to ask my advice, and permit me to speak candidly——"

"Oh, yes, my lord, I beseech you to use the frankness and sincerity you would shew to a sister!"

"Then allow me to tell you that, for want of employing one of your most precious qualities, you lose vast enjoyments, which would not only fill up that void in your heart, but would distract you from your domestic sorrows and supply that need of stirring emotions, excitement, and,"

added the prince, smiling, "I dare almost venture to add (pray forgive me for having so bad an opinion of your sex), that natural love for mystery and intrigue which exercises so powerful an empire over many, if not all, females."

"What do you mean, my lord?"

"I mean that, if you would *play at the game* of doing good, nothing would please or interest you more."

Madame d'Harville surveyed Rodolph with astonishment.

"And understand," resumed he, "I speak not of sending large sums carelessly, almost disdainfully, to unfortunate creatures, of whom you know nothing, and who are frequently undeserving of your favour. But if you would *amuse* yourself, as I do, at *playing* from time to time at the game of *Providence*, you would acknowledge that occasionally our *good deeds* put on all the piquancy and charms of a romance."

"I must confess, my lord," said Clémence, with a smile, "it never occurred to me to class charity under the head of *amusements*."

"It is a discovery I owe to my horror of all tediums, all wearisome, long-protracted affairs—a sort of horror which has been principally inspired by long political conferences and ministerial discussions. But to return to our game of *amusing* beneficence: I cannot, alas, aspire to possess that disinterested virtue which makes some people content to intrust others with the office of either ill or well distributing their bounty! and, if it merely required me to send one of my chamberlains to carry a few hundred louis to each of the divisions in and round Paris, I confess, to my shame, that the scheme would not interest me nearly as much as it does as present; while doing good, after my notions on the subject, is one of the most entertaining and exciting *amusements* you can imagine. I prefer the word *amusing*, because to me it conveys the idea of all that pleases, charms, and allures us. And really, madame, if you would only become my *accomplice* in a few *dark intrigues* of this sort, you would see that, apart from the praiseworthiness of the action, nothing is really more curious, inviting, attractive, or diverting, than these charitable adventures. And, then, what mystery is requisite to conceal the benefits we render! what precautions to prevent ourselves from being discovered! what varied, yet powerful, emotions are excited at the aspect of poor but worthy people shedding tears of joy and calling down Heaven's blessing on your head! Depend upon it, such a group is, after all, more gratifying than the pale angry countenance of either a jealous or an unfaithful lover, and there are very few who do not class either under one head or the other. The emotions I describe are closely allied to those you experienced this morning while going to the Rue du Temple. Simply dressed, that you may escape observation, you go forth with a palpitating heart; you also ascend with a throbbing breast some modest *fiacre*, carefully drawing down the blinds to prevent yourself from being seen; then, looking cautiously from side to side that you are not observed, you quickly enter a mean-looking dwelling, just like this morning, you see, the only difference being, that whereas to-day you said, 'If I am discovered I am lost!' *then* you would only smile as you mentally uttered, 'If I am discovered, they will overwhelm me with praises and

blessings!' Now, since you possess your many adorable qualities in all their pure modesty, you would employ the most artful schemes, the most complicated manœuvres, to prevent yourself from being known, and consequently wept over and blessed as an angel of goodness.

"Ah, my lord," cried Madame d'Harville, deeply moved, "you are indeed my preserver! I cannot express the new ideas, the consoling hopes, awakened within me by your words. You are quite right; to endeavour to gain the blessing and gratitude of such as are poor and in misery is almost equal to being loved even as *I* would wish to be; nay, it is even superior in its purity and absence of self. When I compare the existence I now venture to anticipate with the shameful and degraded lot I was preparing for myself, my own reproaches become more bitter and severe."

"I should, indeed, be grieved," said Rodolph, smiling, "were that to be the case, since all my desire is to make you forget the past, and to prove to you that there are various modes of recreating and distracting our minds: the *means* of *good* and *evil* are very frequently nearly the same, it is the *end*, only, which differs. In a word, if *good* is as *attractive*, as *amusing*, as *evil*, why should we prefer the latter? I am going to use a very commonplace and hackneyed simile. Why do many women take as lovers men not nearly as worthy of that distinction as their own husbands? Because the greatest charm of love consists in the difficulties which surround it; for once deprived of the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, difficulties, mysteries, and dangers, and little or nothing would remain, merely the lover, stripped of all the *prestige* derivable from these causes, and a very every-day object he would appear; very much after the fashion of the individual who, when asked by a friend why he did not marry his mistress, replied, 'Why I was thinking of it, but, if I did, where should I go to pass my evenings?'"

"Your picture is coloured after nature, my lord," said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Well, then, if I can find the means of enabling you to experience the fears, the anxieties, the excitement, which seem to have such charms for you, if I can render useful your natural love for mystery and romance, your inclination for dissimulation and artifice,—you see my bad opinion of your sex will peep out in spite of me," added Rodolph, gaily,—"shall I not change into fine and generous qualities instincts, which otherwise are mere ungovernable and unmanageable impulses, excellent, if well employed, most fatal, if directed badly. Now, then, what do you say? shall we get up all manner of benevolent plots and charitable dissipations? We will have our rendezvous, our correspondence, our secrets, and, above all, we will carefully conceal all our doings from the marquis, for your visit of to-day to the Morels has, in all probability, excited his suspicions. There, you see, it only requires your consent to commence a regular intrigue."

"I accept with joy and gratitude the *mysterious* associations you propose, my lord," said Clémence; "and, by way of beginning our romance, I will return to-morrow to visit those poor creatures to whom, unfortunately, this morning I could only utter a few words of consolation; for, taking advantage of my terror and alarm, the purse you so thought-

fully supplied me with was stolen from me by a lame boy as I ascended the stairs. Ah, my lord," added Clémence (and her countenance lost

the expression of gentle gaiety by which a few minutes before it was animated), "if you only knew what misery, what a picture of wretchedness —— No! oh, no! I never could have believed so horrid a scene, or that such want existed; and yet I bewail my condition and complain of my severe destiny."

Rodolph, wishing to conceal from Madame d'Harville how deeply he was touched at this application of the woes of others, as teaching patience and resignation, yet fully recognising in the meek and subdued spirit the fine and noble qualities of her mind, said, gaily,—

"With your permission, I shall except the Morels from your jurisdiction; you shall resign them to my care, and, above all things, promise me not again to enter that miserable place, for, to tell you the truth, I live there."

"You, my lord? What an idea!"

"Nay, but you really must believe me when I say I live there, for it is actually true. I confess mine is somewhat a humble lodging, a mere matter of eight pounds a-year, in addition to which I pay the large and liberal sum of six francs a-month to the porteress, Madame Pipelet, that ugly old woman you saw; but, to make up for all this, I have as my next neighbour Mademoiselle Rigolette, the prettiest grisette in the

Quartier du Temple. And you must allow that, for a merchant's clerk, with a salary of only seventy-two pounds a-year (I pass as a clerk), such a domicile is well suited to my means."

"Your unhoped-for presence in that fatal house proves to me that you are speaking seriously, my lord; some generous action leads you there, no doubt! But what good action do you reserve for me? what part do you propose for me to sustain?"

"That of an angel of consolation, and—pray excuse and allow me the word—a very demon of cunning and manœuvres! For there are some wounds so painful as well as delicate, that the hand of a woman only can watch over and heal them. There are, also, unfortunate beings so proud, so reserved, and so hidden from observation, that it requires uncommon penetration to discover them, and an irresistible charm to win their confidence."

"And when shall I have an opportunity of displaying the penetration and skill for which you give me credit?" asked Madame d'Harville impatiently.

"Soon, I hope, you will have to make a conquest worthy of you. But, to succeed, you must employ all your most ingenious resources."

"And when, my lord, will you confide this great secret to me?"

"Let me see! You perceive, we have already got as far as arranging our rendezvous. Could you do me the favour to grant me an audience in four days' time?"

"Dear me! so long first?" said Clémence, innocently.

"But what would become of the mystery of the affair, and all the strict forms and appearances necessary to be kept up, if we were to meet sooner? Just imagine! If our *partnership* were suspected, people would be on their guard, and we should seldom achieve our purpose. I may very probably have to write to you. Who was that aged female who brought me your note?"

"An old servant of my mother's, the very personification of prudence and discretion."

"I will then address my letters under cover to her, and she will deliver them into your hands. If you are kind enough to return any answer, address "To M. Rodolph, Rue Plumet," and let your maid put your letters in the post."

"I will do that myself, my lord, when taking my usual morning's walk."

"Do you often walk out alone?"

"In fine weather, nearly every day."

"That's right! It is a custom all young women should observe from the very earliest period of their marriage—either from a good or an improper provision against future evil. The habit once established, it becomes what the lawyers style a *precedent;* and, in subsequent days, these habitual promenades excite no dangerous interpretations. If I had been a woman (and, between ourselves, I fear I should have been very charitable, but equally flighty), the very day after my marriage I should, in all possible innocence, have taken the most mysterious steps, and, with perfect simplicity, have involved myself in all manner of suspicious and compromising proceedings, for the purpose of establishing the *precedent* I spoke of, in order to be at liberty either to visit my poor pensioners or to meet my lover."

"But that would be downright perfidy to one's husband, would it not, my lord?" said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Fortunately for you, madame, you have never been driven to the necessity of admitting the utility of such provisionary measures."

Madame d'Harville's smile left her lips. She cast down her eyes, and, blushing deeply, said, in a low and sad voice, "This is not generous, my lord!"

At first Rodolph regarded the marquise with astonishment, then added, "I understand you, madame. But, once for all, let us weigh well your position as regards M. Charles Robert. I will just imagine that one of your acquaintances may one day have pointed out to you one of those pitiable-looking mendicants who roll their eyes most sentimentally, and play on the clarionet with desperate energy, to awaken the sympathy of

the passers-by. 'That is really and truly a genuine case of distress,' observes your friend. 'That interesting musician has at least seven

children, and a wife deaf, dumb, blind,' &c. 'Ah, poor fellow!' you reply, charitably aiding him with your purse. And so, each time you meet this case of genuine distress, the clarionet-player, the moment he discerns you from afar, fixes his imploring eyes upon you, while the most touching strains of his instrument are directed to touch your charitable sympathies, and that, too, so successfully, that again your purse opens at this fresh appeal. One day, more than usually disposed to pity this very unfortunate object by the importunities of the friend who first pointed him out to you, and who is most wickedly abusing your generous heart, you resolve to visit this case of *genuine distress*, as your false friend terms it, and to behold the poor object of your solicitude in the midst of his misery. Well, you go. But, lo! the grief-stricken musician has vanished; and in his place you find a lively, rollicking fellow, enjoying himself over some of the good things of this world, and mirthfully carolling forth the last new alehouse catch. Then disgust succeeds to pity; for you have bestowed your sympathy and charity alike upon a mere impostor, neither more nor less. Is it not so?"

Madame d'Harville could not restrain a smile at this singular apologue. She, however, soon checked it, as she added,—

"However grateful I may feel for this mode of justifying my great imprudence, my lord, I can but confess I dare not avail myself of so favourable a pretext as that of mistaken charity."

"Yet, after all, yours was an error based upon motives of noble and generous pity for the wounded feelings of one you believed a *genuine object* for commiseration. Fortunately, there are so many ways left you of atoning for one indiscretion, that your regret need be but small. Shall I not have the pleasure of seeing M. d'Harville this evening?"

"No, my lord. The scene of this morning has so much affected him that he is—ill," said the marquise, in a low, tremulous tone.

"Ah," replied Rodolph, sadly, "I understand! Come, courage! you were saying that you required an aim, a motive, a means of directing your thoughts. Permit me to hope that all this will be accomplished by following out the plan I have proposed. Your heart will be then so filled with the delightful recollection of all the happiness you have caused, and all the good you have effected, that, in all probability, you will find no room for resentment against your husband. In place of angry feelings, you will regard him with the same sorrowing pity you look on your dear child. And as for the interesting little creature herself, now you have confided to me the cause of her delicate health, I almost think myself warranted in bidding you yet entertain hopes of overcoming the fearful complaint which has hitherto affected her tender frame."

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Clémence, clasping her hands with eagerness, "can it be possible? How?—in what manner can my child be saved?"

"I have, as physician to myself and household, a man almost unknown, though possessed of first-rate science. Great part of his life was passed in America; and I remember his speaking to me of some marvellous cures performed by him on slaves attacked by this distressing complaint."

"And do you really think, my lord——"

"Nay, you must not allow yourself to dwell too confidently upon success; the disappointment would be so very severe. Only, do not let us wholly despair."

Clémence d'Harville cast a hasty glance of unutterable gratitude over the noble features of Rodolph, the firm, unflinching friend, who reconciled her to herself with so much good sense, intelligence, and delicacy of feeling. Then she asked herself how, for one instant, she could ever have been interested in the fate of such a being as M. Charles Robert—the very idea was hateful to her.

"What do I not owe you, my lord?" cried she, in a voice of thrilling emotion; "you console me for the past; you open to me a glimpse of hope for my child; and you place before me a plan of future occupation which shall afford me both consolation and the delight of doing my duty. Ah, was I not right when I said that, if you would come here to-night, you would finish the day as you had begun it—by performing a good action?"

"And pray, madame, do not omit to add,—an action after my own heart, where all is pleasure and unmixed enjoyment in its performance. And now, adieu!" said Rodolph, rising as the clock struck half-past eleven.

"Adieu, my lord! and pray do not forget to send me news ere long of those poor people in the Rue du Temple."

"I will see them to-morrow, for, unfortunately, I knew not of that little limping rascal having stolen your purse; and I fear that the unhappy creatures are in the most deplorable want. Have the kindness to bear in mind that, in the course of four days, I shall come to explain to you the nature of the part you will be required to undertake. One thing I must prepare you for; and that is, the probability of its being requisite for you to assume a disguise on the occasion."

"A disguise?—oh, how charming! What sort of one, my lord?"

"I cannot tell you at present. I will leave the choice to you."

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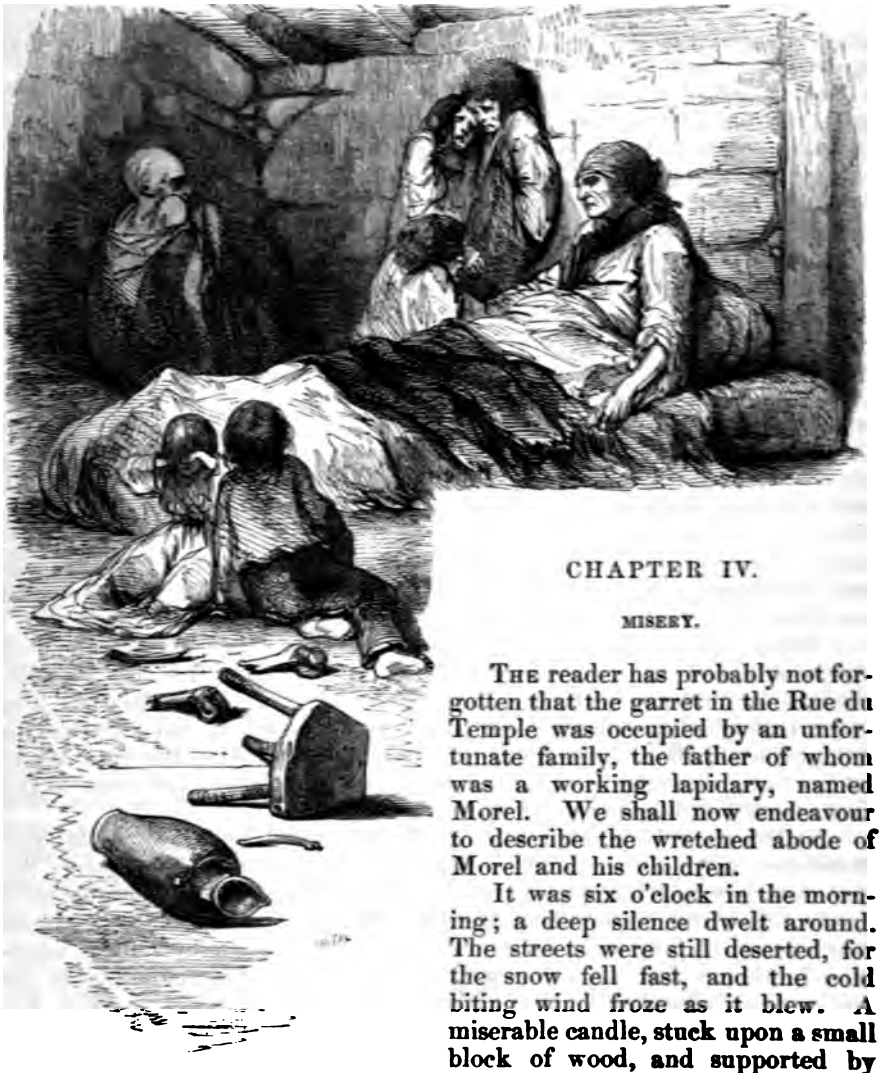
"All that is requisite," said the prince, on his return home, "to save this excellent woman from the perils of another attachment is to fill her mind with generous thoughts; and, since an invincible repugnance separates her from her husband, to employ her love for the romantic in such charitable actions as shall require being enshrouded in mystery."



CHAPTER IV.

MISERY.

The reader has probably not forgotten that the garret in the Rue du Temple was occupied by an unfortunate family, the father of whom was a working lapidary, named Morel. We shall now endeavour to describe the wretched abode of Morel and his children.

It was six o'clock in the morning; a deep silence dwelt around. The streets were still deserted, for the snow fell fast, and the cold biting wind froze as it blew. A miserable candle, stuck upon a small block of wood, and supported by two slips of the same material, scarcely penetrated with its yellow flickering light the misty darkness of the garret,—a narrow, low-built place, two-thirds of which were formed by the sloping roof, which communicated by a sharp angle with the wretched flooring, and freely exposed the moss-covered tiles of the outer roof. Walls covered with plaster, blackened by time, and split into countless crevices, displayed the rotten, worm-eaten laths, which formed the frail division from other chambers, while in one corner of this deplorable habitation a door off the hinges opened upon a narrow staircase. The ground, of a nameless colour, but foul, fetid, and slippery, was partly strewed with bits of dirty straw, old rags, and bones, the residue of that unwholesome and vitiated food sold by the dealers in condemned meat, and frequently bought by

starving wretches, for the purpose of gnawing the few cartilages that may adhere.*

So wretched a condition either arises from improvidence and vice, or from unavoidable misery,—misery so great, so overwhelming, and paralysing, as to enfeeble every energy, and to render the unhappy object of it too hopeless, too despairing, even to attempt to extricate himself from the squalor of his utter destitution, and he crouches in his dirt and desolation like an animal in its den.

During the day, Morel's garret was lighted by a species of long, narrow skylight formed in the descending roof, framed and glazed, and made to open and shut by means of a pulley and string; but, at the hour which we are describing, a heavy fall of snow encumbered the window, and effectually prevented its affording any light. The candle placed on Morel's working-table, which stood in the centre of the chamber, diffused a kind of halo of pale, sickly beams, which, gradually diminishing, was at last lost in the dim shadow which overspread the place, in whose murky duskiness might be seen the faint outline of several white-looking masses. On the work-table, which was merely a heavy and roughly cut wooden block of unpolished oak, covered with grease and soot, lay, loosely scattered about, a handful of rubies and diamonds, of more than ordinary size and brilliancy, while, as the mean rays of the small candle were reflected on them, they glittered and sparkled like so many coruscating fires.

Morel was a worker of *real stones*, and not FALSE ones, as he had given out, and as was universally believed, in the Rue du Temple. Thanks to this innocent deception, the costly jewels intrusted to him were merely supposed to be so many pieces of glass, too valueless to tempt the cupidity of any one. Such riches, confided to the care of one as poor and miserably destitute as Morel, will render any reference to the honesty of his character quite unnecessary.

Seated on a high stool, and wholly overcome by fatigue, cold, and weariness, after a long winter's night, passed in unceasing labour, the poor lapidary had fallen asleep on his block, with his head upon his half-frozen arms, and his forehead resting against a small grindstone, placed horizontally on the table, and generally put in motion by a little hand-wheel, while a fine steel saw, and various other tools belonging to his trade, were lying beside him. The man himself, of whom nothing but the skull, surrounded by a fringe of grey hairs, was visible, was dressed in a shabby fustian jacket, without any species of linen or garment beneath it, and an old pair of cloth trousers, while his worn-out slippers scarcely concealed the blue, cold feet they partially covered, from resting solely on the damp, shiny floor; and so bitter, so freezing, was the sharp winter wind which freely entered into this scarcely human dwelling, that, spite of the weariness and exhaustion of the overworked artisan, his frame shuddered and shivered with involuntary frequency. The length of the wick of the unsnuffed candle bespoke the length of time even this uneasy slumber must have lasted, and no sound, save his troubled and irregular breathing, broke the deathlike silence that prevailed; for, alas! the

* It is no uncommon thing to meet, in densely crowded parts of Paris, with persons who openly sell the flesh of animals born dead, as well as of others who have died of disease, &c.

other occupants of this mean abode were not so fortunate as to be able to forget their sufferings in sleep. Yet this narrow, pent-up, unwholesome spot contained no less than seven other persons—five children, the youngest of whom was four years of age, the eldest twelve, a sick and declining wife, with an aged grandmother, the parent of Morel's wife, now in her eightieth year, and an idiot!

The cold must have been intense, indeed, when the natural warmth of so many persons, so closely packed together in so small a place, could not in any way affect the freezing atmosphere; it was evident, therefore, to speak *scientifically*, that but *little caloric was given out* by the poor, weak, emaciated, shivering creatures, all suffering and almost expiring with cold and hunger, from the puny infant to the idiotic old grandmother.

With the exception of the father of the family, who had temporarily yielded to the aching of his heavy eyelids, no other creature slept—no other; because cold, starvation, and sickness, will not allow so sweet an enjoyment as the closing the eyes in peaceful rest. Little does the world believe how rarely comes that sound, healthful, and refreshing slumber to the poor man's pillow, which at once invigorates the mind and body, and sends the willing labourer back to his toil refreshed and recruited by the blessing of a beneficent Creator. To taste of nature's sweet, refreshing, balmy sleep, sickness, sorrow, poverty, and mental disquietude, must not share the humble pallet.

In contrasting the deep misery of the poor artisan, with whose woes we are now occupying the reader, with the immense value of the jewellery confided to him, we are struck by one of those comparisons which afflict while they elevate the mind. With the distracting spectacle of his family's want and wretchedness, embracing a wide field from cold and hunger to drivelling idiotcy, constantly before his eyes, this man, in the pursuance of his daily labour, is compelled to touch, and handle, and gaze upon, bright and sparkling gems, the smallest of which would be a mine of wealth to him, and save those dearest to him from sufferings and privations which wring his very heart, would snatch them from the slow and lingering death which is consuming them before his eyes. Yet, amid all these trials and temptations, the artisan remains firmly, truly, and unflinchingly honest, and would no more appropriate one of the glittering stones intrusted to him than he would satisfy his hunger at the expense of his starving babes. Doubtless the man but performed his duty to his employer—his simple duty; but, because it is enjoined to all to be honest and faithful in that which is committed to them, does that render the action itself less noble, magnanimous, or praiseworthy? Is not this unfortunate artisan, so courageously, so bravely upright and honest while intrusted with the property of another, the type and model of an immense class of working people, who, doomed to a life of continual poverty and privation, see, with calm, patient looks, thousands of their brethren rolling in splendour and abounding in riches, yet they toil on, resigned and unenvying, but still industriously striving for bread their hardest efforts cannot always procure? And is there not something consolatory, as well as gratifying to our feelings, to consider that it is neither force nor terror, but *good natural sense and a right mind*, which alone restrain this formidable ocean, this heaving mass, whose bounds

once broken a moral inundation would ensue, in which society itself would be swallowed up? Shall we, then, refuse to co-operate with all the powers of our mind and body with those generous and enlightened spirits, who ask but a little *sunshine* for so much misfortune, courage, and resignation?

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Let us now return to the alas! too true specimen of distressing want we shall endeavour to describe in all its fearful and startling reality.

The lapidary possessed only a thin mattrass and a portion of a blanket

Morel.

appropriated to the old grandmother, who, in her stupid and ferocious selfishness, would not allow any person to share them with her. In the beginning of the winter she had become quite violent, and had even attempted to strangle the youngest child, who had been put to sleep with

her: this poor infant was a sickly little creature of about four years old, now far gone in consumption, and who found it too cold *inside* the mattrass, where she slept with her brothers and sisters. Hereafter we shall explain this mode of sleeping so frequently employed by the very poor, in comparison with whom the very animals are treated luxuriously, for *their* litter is changed. Such was the picture presented in the humble garret of the poor lapidary, when the eye was enabled to pierce the gloomy penumbra caused by the flickering rays of the candle. By the side of the partition-wall, not less damp and cracked than the others, was placed on the floor the mattrass on which the idiot grandmother reposed; as she could not bear any thing on her head, her white hair was cut very short, and revealed the shape of her head and flat forehead; while her shaggy, grey eyebrows shaded the deep orbits, from which glared a wild, savage, yet crafty, look; her pale, hollow wrinkled cheeks hung upon the bones of the face and the sharp angles of her jaws. Lying upon her side, and almost doubled up, her chin nearly touching her knees, she lay, shivering with cold, beneath the grey rug, too small to cover her all over, and which, as she drew it over her shoulders, exposed her thin emaciated legs, as well as the wretched old petticoat in which she was clad. An odour most fetid and repulsive issued from this bed.

At a little distance from the mattrass of the grandmother, and still extending along the side of the wall, was placed the *paillasse* which served as a sleeping-place for the five children, who were accommodated after the following manner:—

An opening was made at each side of the cloth which covered the straw, and the children were inserted into this bed, or, rather, foul and noisome dunghill, the outer case serving both for sheet and counterpane. Two little girls, one of whom was extremely ill, shivered on one side, and

three young boys on the other, all going to bed without undressing, if, indeed, the miserable rags they wore could be termed clothes. Masses of thick, dry, light hair, tangled, ragged, and uncombed, left uncut because their poor mother fancied it helped to keep them warm, half covered their pale, thin, pinched features. One of the boys drew with his cold, benumbed fingers the covering over their straw bed up to his chin, in order to defend himself from the cold; while another, fearful of exposing his hands to the influence of the frost, tried to grasp the bed-covering with his teeth, which rattled and shook in his head; while a third strove to huddle up to his brothers in hopes of gaining a little warmth. The youngest of the two girls, fatally attacked by consumption, leaned her poor little face, which already bore the hue of death, languidly against the chilly bosom of her sister, a girl just one year older, who vainly sought by pressing her in her arms to impart comfort and ease to the little sufferer, over whom she watched with the anxious solicitude of a parent.

On another *paillasse*, also placed on the ground at the foot of that of the children, the wife of the artisan was extended, groaning in helpless exhaustion from the effects of a slow fever and an internal complaint, which had not permitted her to quit her bed for several months. Madeleine Morel was in her thirty-sixth year; a blue cotton handkerchief, tied round her low forehead, made the bilious pallor of her countenance and sharp, emaciated features still more conspicuous. A dark halo encircled her hollow, sunken eyes; while her lips were split and bleeding from the effects of the fever which consumed her; her dejected, grief-worn physiognomy, and small, insignificant features, indicated one of those gentle but weak natures, without resource or energy, which, unable to struggle with misfortunes, yield at once, and know no remedy but vain and ceaseless lamentations and regrets. Weak, spiritless, and of limited capacity, she had remained honest because her husband was so; had she been left to herself, it is probable that ignorance and misfortune might have depraved her mind and driven her to any lengths. She loved her husband and her children, but she had neither the courage nor resolution to restrain giving vent to loud and open complaints respecting their mutual misery; and frequently was the lapidary, whose unflinching labour alone maintained the family, obliged to quit his work to console and pacify the poor valetudinarian. Over and above an old ragged sheet, of coarse brown cloth, which partially covered his wife, Morel had, in order to impart a little warmth, laid a few old clothes, so worn out, and patched, and pieced, that the pawnbroker had refused to have any thing to do with them.

A stove, a saucepan, a damaged earthen stewpan, two or three cracked cups, scattered about on the floor, a bucket, a board to wash on, and a large stone pitcher, placed beneath the angle of the roof near the broken door, which the wind kept continually blowing to and fro, completed the whole of the family possessions.

This picture of squalid misery and desolation was lighted up by the candle, whose flame, agitated by the cold north-easterly wind, which found its way through the tiles on the roof, sometimes imparted a pale, unearthly light on the wretched scene, and then, playing on the heaps of diamonds and rubies laying beside the sleeping artisan, caused a thousand

scintillating sparks to spring forth and dazzle the eye with their prismatic rays of brightness.

Although the profoundest silence reigned around, seven out of the eight unfortunate dwellers in this attic were awake; and each, from the grandmother to the youngest child, watched the sleeping lapidary with intense emotion, as their only hope, their only resource, and, in their child-like selfishness, they murmured at seeing him thus inactive and relinquishing that labour which they well knew was all they had to depend on: but with different feelings of regret and uneasiness did the lookers-on observe the slumber of the toil-worn man. The mother trembled for her children's meal; the children thought but of themselves; while the idiot neither thought of nor cared for any one. All at once she sat upright in her wretched bed, crossed her long bony arms, yellow and dry as box-wood, on her shrivelled bosom, and kept watching the candle with twinkling eyes; then, rising slowly and stealthily, she crept along, trailing after her her old ragged coverlet, which clung around her, as though it had been her winding-sheet. She was above the middle height, and her hair being so closely shaven made her head appear disproportionately small; a sort of spasmodic movement kept up a constant trembling in her thick, pendulous under-lip, while her whole countenance offered the hideous model of ferocious stupidity. Slowly and cautiously the idiot approached the lapidary's work-table, like a child about to commit some forbidden act. When she reached the candle, she held her two trembling hands over the flame; and such was their skeleton-like condition, that the flickering light shone through them, imparting a pale, livid hue to her features. From her pallet Madeleine Morel watched every movement of the old woman, who, still warming herself over the candle, stooped her head, and, with a silly kind of delight, watched the sparkling of the diamonds and rubies, which lay glittering on the table. Wholly absorbed in the wondrous contemplation of such bright and beautiful things, the idiot allowed her hands to fall into the flame of the candle, nor did she seem to recollect where they were till the sense of burning recalled her attention, when she manifested her pain and anger by a harsh, screaming cry.

At this sound Morel started, and quickly raised his head. He was about forty years of age, with an open, intelligent, and mild expression of countenance, but yet wearing the sad, dejected look of one who had been the sport of misery and misfortune till they had planted furrows in his cheeks and crushed and broken his spirit. A grey beard of many weeks' growth covered the lower part of his face, which was deeply marked by the small-pox; premature wrinkles furrowed his already bald forehead; while his red and inflamed eyelids shewed the over-taxed and sleepless days and nights of toil he so courageously endured. A circumstance, but too common with such of the working class as are doomed by their occupation to remain nearly all day in one position, had warped his figure, and, acting upon a naturally feeble constitution, had produced a contraction of his whole frame. Continually obliged to stoop over his work-table and to lean to the left, in order to keep his grindstone going, the lapidary, in a manner petrified, ossified in the attitude he was frequently obliged to preserve from twelve to fifteen hours a-day, had acquired an habitual stoop of the shoulders, and was completely drawn

on one side. So his left arm, incessantly exercised by the difficult management of the grindstone, had acquired a considerable muscular developement; whilst the right arm, always inert and leaning on the table, the better to present the faces of the diamonds to the action of the grindstone, had wasted to the most extreme attenuation; his wasted limbs, almost paralysed by complete want of exercise, could scarcely support the weary, worn-out body, as though all strength, substance, and vitality, had concentrated themselves in the only part called into play when toiling for the subsistence of, with himself, eight human creatures.

And often would poor Morel touchingly observe, "It is not for myself that I care to eat, but to give strength to the arm which turns the mill."

Awaking with a sudden start, the lapidary found himself directly opposite to the poor idiot.

"What ails you? what is the matter, mother?" said Morel; and then added, in a lower tone, for fear of awaking the family, whom he hoped and believed were asleep, "Go back to bed, mother; Madeleine and the children are asleep!"

"No, father," cried the eldest of the little girls, "I am awake; I am trying to warm poor little Adèle."

"And I am too hungry to go to sleep," added one of the boys; "it was not my turn to-night to have supper with Mademoiselle Rigolette."

"Poor things!" said Morel, sorrowfully, "I thought you were asleep—at least——"

"I was afraid of awaking you, Morel," said the wife, "or I should have begged of you to give me a drink of water: I am devoured with thirst! My feverish fit has come on again!"

"I will directly," said the lapidary; "only let me first get mother back to bed. Come! come! what are you meddling with those stones for? Let them alone, I say!" cried he to the old woman, whose whole attention seemed riveted upon a splendid ruby, the bright scintillations of which had so charmed the poor idiot, that she was trying by every possible means to gain possession of it.

"There's a pretty thing!—there—there!" replied the woman, pointing with vehement gestures to the prize she so ardently coveted.

"I shall be angry in a few minutes," exclaimed Morel, speaking in a loud voice to terrify his mother-in-law into submission, and gently pushing back the hand she advanced to seize her desired treasure.

"Oh, Morel! Morel!" murmured Madeleine, "I am parching, dying with thirst. How can you be so cruel as refuse me a little water?"

"But how can I at present? I must not allow mother to meddle with these stones—perhaps to lose me a diamond, as she did a year ago; and God alone knows the wretchedness and misery it cost us—ay, may still occasion us. Ah, that unfortunate loss of the diamond, what have we not suffered by it!"

As the poor lapidary uttered these words, he passed his hand over his aching brow with a desponding air, and said to one of the children,—

"Felix, give your mother something to drink. You are awake, and can attend to her."

"No, no," exclaimed Madeleine; "he will take cold. I will wait."

"Oh, mother," said the boy, rising, "never mind me. I shall be quite as warm up as I am *in* this *paillasse*."

"Come, will you let the things alone?" cried Morel, in a threatening tone, to the idiot woman, who kept bending over the precious stones and trying to seize them, spite of all his efforts to move her from the table.

"Mother," called out Felix, "what shall I do? The water in the pitcher is frozen quite hard."

"Then break the ice," murmured Madeleine.

"It is so thick, I can't," answered the boy.

"Morel!" exclaimed Madeleine, in a querulous and impatient tone, "since there is nothing but water for me to drink, let me at least have a draught of that! You are letting me die with thirst!"

"God of Heaven grant me patience!" cried the unfortunate man. "How can I leave your mother to lose and destroy these stones? Pray let me manage her first."

But the lapidary found it no easy matter to get rid of the idiot, who, beginning to feel irritated at the constant opposition she met with, gave utterance to her displeasure in a sort of hideous growl.

"Call her, wife!" said Morel, "she will attend to you sometimes."

"Mother! mother!" called Madeleine, "go to bed, and be good, and then you shall have some of that nice coffee you are so fond of!"

"I want that! and that! There! there!" replied the idiot, making a

desperate effort this time to possess herself of a heap of rubies she particularly coveted. Morel firmly, but gently, repulsed her—all in vain; with pertinacious obstinacy the old woman kept struggling to break from his grasp, and snatch the bright gems, on which she kept her eyes fixed with eager fondness.

"You will never manage her," said Madeleine, "unless you frighten her with the whip; there is no other means of making her quiet."

"I am afraid not," returned Morel; "but, though she has no sense, it yet goes to my heart to be obliged to threaten an old woman, like her, with the whip."

Then, addressing the old woman, who was trying to bite him, and whom he was holding back with one hand, he said, in a loud and terrible voice,—"Take care; you'll have the whip on your shoulders if you don't make haste to bed this very instant!"

These menaces were equally vain with his former efforts to subdue her. Morel then took a whip which lay beside his work-table, and, cracking it violently, said,—"Get to bed with you directly! get to bed!"

As the loud noise of the whip saluted the ear of the idiot, she hurried away from the lapidary's work-table, then, suddenly turning round, she uttered low, grumbling sounds between her clenched teeth; while she surveyed her son-in-law with looks of the deepest hatred.

"To bed! to bed, I say!" continued he, still advancing, and feigning to raise his whip with the intention of striking; while the idiot, holding her fist towards her son-in-law, retreated backwards to her wretched couch.

The lapidary, anxious to terminate this painful scene, that he might be at liberty to attend to his sick wife, kept still advancing towards the idiot woman, brandishing and cracking his whip, though without allowing it to touch the unhappy creature, repeatedly exclaiming, "To bed! to bed —directly! Do you hear?"

The old woman, now thoroughly conquered, and fully believing in the reality of the threats held out, began to howl most hideously; and crawling into her bed, like a dog to his kennel, she kept up a continued series of cries, screams, and yells, while the frightened children, believing their poor old grandmother had actually been beaten, began crying piteously, exclaiming, "Don't beat poor granny, father! Pray don't flog granny!"

It is wholly impossible to describe the fearful effect of these nocturnal horrors, in which were mingled, in one turmoil of sounds, the supplicating cries of the children, the furious yellings of the idiot, and the wailing complaints of the lapidary's sick wife.

To poor Morel such scenes as this were but too frequent. Still, upon the present occasion, his patience and courage seemed utterly to forsake him; and, throwing down the whip upon his work-table, he exclaimed, in bitter despair, "Oh, what a life! what a life!"

"Is it my fault if my mother is an idiot?" asked Madeleine, weeping.

"Is it mine, then?" replied Morel. "All I ask for is peace and quiet enough to allow me to work myself to death for you all. God knows, I labour alike night and day! Yet I complain not. And, as long as my strength holds out, I will exert myself to the utmost; but it is quite impossible for me to attend to my business, and be at once a keeper to a mad woman, and a nurse to sick people and young children. And Heaven is unjust to put it upon me—yes, I say unjust! It is too much misery to heap on one man," added Morel, in a tone bordering on distraction. So saying, the heart-broken lapidary threw himself on his stool, and covered his face with his hands.

"Can I help the people at the hospital having refused to receive my mother, because she was not raving mad?" asked Madeleine, in a low, peevish, and complaining voice. "What can I do to alter it? What is the use of your grumbling to me about my mother? and, if you fret ever so much about what neither you nor I can alter, what good will that do?"

"None at all," rejoined the artisan, hastily brushing the large bitter drops despair had driven to his eyes; "none whatever—you are right; but when every thing goes against you, it is difficult to know what to do or say."

"Gracious Father!" cried Madeleine, "what an agony of thirst I am enduring! My lips are parched with the fever which is consuming me, and yet I shiver as though death were on me!"

"Wait one instant, and I will give you some drink!" So saying, Morel took the pitcher which stood beneath the roof, and, after having with difficulty broken the ice which covered the water, he filled a cup with the frozen liquid, and brought it to the bedside of his wife, who stretched forth her impatient hands to receive it; but, after a moment's reflection, he said, "No, no, I must not let you have it cold as this; in your present state of fever it would be dangerous."

"So much the better if it *be* dangerous! Quick, quick—give it me!" cried Madeleine, with bitterness; "it will the sooner end my misery, and free you from such an incumbrance as I am: then you will only have to look after mad folks and young children—there will be no sick-nurse to take up your time."

"Why do you say such hard words to me, Madeleine?" asked Morel, mournfully; "you know I do not deserve them. Pray do not add to my vexations, for I have scarcely strength or reason enough left to go on with my work; my head feels as though something were amiss with it, and I fear much my brain will give way—and then what would become of you all? 'Tis for you I speak; were there only myself, I should trouble very little about to-morrow—thank Heaven, the river flows for every one!"

"Poor Morel!" said Madeleine, deeply affected, "I was very wrong to speak so angrily to you, and to say I knew you would be glad to get rid of me. Pray forgive me, for indeed I did not mean any harm; for, after all, what use am I either to you or the children? For the last sixteen months I have kept my bed! Gracious God! what I do suffer with thirst! For pity's sake, husband, give me something to moisten my burning lips!"

"You shall have it directly; I was trying to warm the cup between my hands."

"How good you are! and yet I could say such wicked things to you!"

"My poor wife, you are ill and in pain, and that makes you impatient; say anything you like to me, but pray never tell me again I wish to get rid of you!"

"But what good am I to any one? what good are our children? None whatever; on the contrary, they heap more toil upon you than you can bear."

"True; yet you see that my love for them and you has endued me with strength and resolution to work frequently twenty hours out of the twenty-four, till my body is bent and deformed by such incessant labour. Do you believe for one instant that I would thus toil and struggle on my own account? Oh, no! life has no such charms for me; and if I were the only sufferer, I would quickly put an end to it."

"And so would I," said Madeleine. "God knows, but for the children I should have said to you, long ago, 'Morel, we have had more than enough to weary us of our lives; there is nothing left but to finish our misery by the help of a pan of charcoal!' But then I recollected the poor, dear, helpless children, and my heart would not let me leave them, alone and unprotected, to starve by themselves."

"Well, then, you see, wife, that the children are, after all, of real good to us, since they prevent us giving way to despair, and serve as a motive for exerting ourselves," replied Morel, with ready ingenuity, yet perfect simplicity of tone and manner. "Now, then, take your drink, but only swallow a little at a time, for it is very cold still."

"Oh, thank you, Morel!" cried Madeleine, snatching the cup, and drinking it eagerly.

"Enough! enough! no more! you shall not have any more just now, Madeleine."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Madeleine, giving back the cup, "how cold it seems now I have swallowed it—it has brought back those dreadful shiverings!"

"Alas!" ejaculated Morel, "I told you so—ah, now you are quite ill again!"

"I have not strength even to tremble—I seem as though I were covered over with ice."

Morel took off his jacket, and laid it over his wife's feet, remaining quite naked down to his waist—the unhappy man did not possess a shirt.

"But you will be frozen to death, Morel!"

"Never mind me; if I find it cold by and bye, I will put my jacket on for a few minutes."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Madeleine. "Ah, as you say, Heaven is not just! What have we done to be so wretched, while so many others——"

"Every one has their troubles—some more, some less—the great as well as the small."

"Yes; but great people know nothing of the gnawings of hunger, or the bitter pinching of the cold. Why, when I look on those diamonds,

and remember that the smallest amongst them would place us and the poor children in ease and comfort, my heart sickens, and I ask myself why it is some should have so much, and others nothing? And what good are these diamonds, after all, to their owners?"

"Why, if we were to go to the question of what half the luxuries of life are really *good for*, we might go a great way: for instance, what is the good of that grand gentleman Madame Pipelet calls the Commandant having engaged and furnished the first floor of this house, when he seldom enters them? what use is it his having these good beds, and warm covering to them, since he never sleeps in them?"

"Very true; there is more furniture lying idle there than would supply two or three poor families like ours. And then Madame Pipelet lights a fire every day, to preserve the things from the damp. Only think of so much comfortable warmth being lost, while we and the children are almost frozen to death! But then, you will say, we are not articles of value; no, indeed, we are not. Oh, these rich folks, what hard hearts they have!"

"Not harder than other people's, Madeleine; but then, you see, they do not know what misery or want are. They are born rich and happy, they live and die so. How, then, do you expect they can ever think such poor distressed beings exist in a world which to them is all happiness? No! I tell you, they have no idea of such things as fellow-creatures toiling beyond their strength for food, and perishing at last with hunger! How is it possible for them to imagine privations like ours? The greater their hunger, the greater enjoyment of their abundant meal. Is the weather severe, or the cold intense, they call it a *fine frost*, a *healthful, bracing* season. If they walk out, they return to a glowing, cheerful fire, which the cold only makes them relish the more; so that they can scarcely be expected to sympathise with such as are said to suffer from cold and hunger, when those two things rather add to than diminish their pleasure."

"Ah! poor folks are better than rich, since they can feel for each other, and are always ready and willing to assist each other, as much as lies in their power. Look at that kind, good Mademoiselle Rigolette, who has so often sat up all night, either with me or the children, during our illness. Why, last night she took Jérome and Pierre into her room, to share her supper, and it was not much, either, she had for herself—only a cup of milk, and some bread; at her age, all young people have good appetites, and she must have deprived herself to give to the children."

"Poor girl! she is indeed most kind—and why is she so? Because she knows what poverty is. As I said to you just now, if the rich only knew ——"

"And then that nice-looking lady who came, seeming so frightened all the while, to ask us if we wanted any thing. Well, now, she knows that we do want every thing, will she ever come again, think you?"

"I daresay she will; for, spite of her uneasy and terrified looks, she seemed very good and kind."

"Oh, yes; if a person be but rich, they are always right in your

opinion. One might almost suppose that rich folks are made of different materials to poor creatures like us."

"Stop, wife!" said Morel, gently; "you are getting on too fast. I did not say that; on the contrary, I agree that rich people have as many faults as poor ones: all I mean is, that, unfortunately, they are not aware of the wretchedness of one-half of the world. Agents in plenty are employed to hunt out poor wretches who have committed any crime, but there are no paid agents to find out half-starving families, and honest artisans, worn-out with toil and privations, who, driven to the last extremity of distress, are, for want of a little timely succour, led into sore temptation. It is quite right to punish evil-doers; it would, perhaps, be better still to prevent ill-deeds. A man may have striven hard to remain honest for fifty years; but want, misery, and utter destitution, put bad thoughts in his head, and one rascal more is let loose on the world; whilst there are many who, if they had but known of his distressed condition —— However, it is no use talking of that—the world is as it is: I am poor and wretched, and therefore I speak as I do; were I rich, my talk would be of fêtes, and happy days, and worldly engagements!—— And how do you find yourself now, wife?"

"Much the same; I seem to have lost all feeling in my limbs. But how you shiver! here, take your jacket, and pray put it on. Blow out that candle, which is burning uselessly—see, it is nearly day!"

And, true enough, a faint, glimmering light began to struggle through the snow with which the skylight was encumbered, and cast a dismal ray on the interior of this deplorable human abode, rendering its squalidness still more apparent; the shade of night had at least concealed a part of its horrors.

"I shall wait now for the daylight before I go back to work," said the lapidary, seating himself beside his wife's *paillasse*, and leaning his forehead upon his two hands.

After a short interval of silence, Madeleine said,—

"When is Madame Mathieu to come for the stones you are at work upon?"

"This morning. I have only the side of one false diamond to polish."

"A false diamond! How is that?—you who only make up real stones, whatever the people in the house may believe."

"Don't you know? But I forgot, you were asleep the other day when Madame Mathieu came about them. Well, then, she brought me ten false diamonds (Rhine crystals), to cut exactly to the same size and form as the like number of real diamonds she also brought. There, those are them mixed with the rubies on my table. I think I never saw more splendid stones, or of purer water, than those ten diamonds, which must at least be worth sixty thousand francs."

"And why did she wish them imitated?"

"Because a great lady to whom they belonged—a duchess, I think, she said—had given directions to M. Baudoin, the jeweller, to dispose of her set of diamonds, and to make her one of false stones to replace it. Madame Mathieu, who matches stones for M. Baudoin, explained this to me, when she gave me the real diamonds, in order that I might be quite

sure to cut the false ones to precisely the same size and form. Madame Mathieu gave a similar job to four other lapidaries, for there are from forty to fifty stones to cut; and I could not do them all, as they were required by this morning, because M. Baudoin must have time to set the false gems. Madame Mathieu says that grand ladies, very frequently

Madame Mathieu.

unknown to any body but the jeweller, sell their valuable diamonds, and replace them with Rhenish crystals."

"Why, don't you see, the mock stones look every bit as well as the real stones? Yet great ladies, who only use such things as ornaments, would never think of sacrificing one of their diamonds to relieve the distress of such unfortunate beings as we are."

"Come, come, wife! be more reasonable than this; sorrow makes you

unjust. Who do you think knows that such people as Morel and his family are in existence, still less that they are in want?"

"Oh, what a man you are, Morel! I really believe, if any one were to cut you in pieces, that, while they were doing it, you would try to say, 'Thank you!'"

Morel compassionately shrugged his shoulders.

"And how much will Madame Mathieu owe you this morning?" asked Madeleine.

"Nothing; because you know I have already had an advance of 120 francs."

"Nothing! why, our last sous went the day before yesterday. We have not a single farthing belonging to us!"

"Alas, no!" cried Morel, with a dejected air.

"Well, then, what are we to do?"

"I know not."

"The baker refuses to let us have any thing more on credit—will he?"

"No: and I was obliged yesterday to beg Madame Pipelet to lend me part of a loaf."

"Can we borrow any thing more of Mother Burette?"

"She has already every article belonging to us in pledge. What have we to offer her to lend more money on—our children?" asked Morel, with a smile of bitterness.

"But yourself, my mother, and all the children, had but part of a loaf among you all yesterday. You cannot go on in this way; you will be starved to death. It is all your fault that we are not on the books of the charitable institution this year."

"They will not admit any persons without they possess furniture, or some such property; and you know we have nothing in the world. We are looked upon as though we lived in furnished apartments, and, consequently, ineligible. Just the same if we tried to get into any asylum, the children are required to have at least a blouse, while our poor things have only rags. Then, as to the charitable societies, one must go backwards and forwards twenty times before we should obtain relief; and then what would it be? Why, a loaf once a month, and half a pound of meat once a fortnight.* I should lose more time than it would be worth."

"But still, what are we to do?"

"Perhaps the lady who came yesterday will not forget us!"

"Perhaps not. But don't you think Madame Mathieu would lend us four or five francs, just to keep us from starving? You have worked for her upwards of ten years; and surely she will not see an honest workman like you, burthened with a large and sickly family, perish for want of a little assistance like that?"

"I do not think it is in her power to aid us. She did all in her power when she advanced me little by little 120 francs. That is a large sum for her. Because she buys diamonds, and has sometimes 50,000 francs in her reticule, she is not the more rich for that. If she gains

* Such is the ordinary allowance made at charitable societies, in consequence of the vast number of applicants for relief.

100 francs a-month, she is well content, for she has heavy expenses—two nieces to bring up; and five francs is as much to her as it would be to

me. There are times when one does not possess that sum, you know; and being already so deeply in her debt, I could not ask her to take bread from her own mouth and that of her family to give it to me."

"This comes of working for mere agents in jewellery, instead of procuring employment from first-hand master jewellers. They are sometimes less particular. But you are such a poor easy creature, you would almost let any one take the eyes out of your head. It is all your fault that——"

"My fault!" exclaimed the unhappy man, exasperated by this absurd reproach. "Was it or was it not your mother who occasioned all our misfortunes, by compelling me to make good the price of the diamond she lost? But for that we should be beforehand with the world; we should receive the amount of my daily earnings; we should have the 1100 francs in our possession we were obliged to draw out of the savings' bank to put to the 1300 francs lent us by M. Jacques Ferrand. May every curse light on him!"

"And you still persist in not asking him to help you? Certainly he is so stingy, that I daresay he would do nothing for you. But then it is right to try. You cannot know without you do try."

"Ask him to help me!" cried Morel. "Ask him! I had rather be burnt before a slow fire. Hark ye, Madeleine! Unless you wish to drive me mad, mention that man's name no more to me."

As he uttered these words, the usually mild, resigned expression of the lapidary's countenance was exchanged for a look of gloomy energy, while a slight suffusion coloured the ordinarily pale features of the agitated man, as, rising abruptly from the pallet beside which he had been sitting, he began to pace the miserable apartment with hurried steps; and, spite of the deformed and attenuated appearance of poor Morel, his attitude and action bespoke the noblest, purest indignation.

"I am not ill-disposed towards any man," cried he, at length, pausing of a sudden; "and never, to my knowledge, harmed a human being. But, I tell you, when I think of this notary, I wish him—ah! I wish him—as much wretchedness as he has caused me." Then pressing both hands to his forehead, he murmured, in a mournful tone, "Just God! what crime have I committed that a hard fate should deliver me and mine, tied hand and foot, into the power of such a hypocrite? Have his riches been given him only to worry, harass, and destroy those his bad passions lead him to persecute, injure, and corrupt?"

"That's right! that's right!" said Madeleine; "go on abusing him. You will have done yourself a great deal of good, shall you not, when he puts you in prison, as he can do any day, for that promissory note of 1300 francs on which he obtained judgment against you? He holds you fast as a bird at the end of a string. I hate this notary as badly as you do; but since we are so completely in his power, why you should——"

"Let him ruin and dishonour my child, I suppose?" burst from the pale lips of the lapidary, with violent and impatient energy.

"For heaven's sake, Morel, don't speak so loud; the children are awake, and will hear you."

"Pooh, pooh!" returned Morel, with bitter irony; "it will serve as a fine example for our two little girls. It will instruct them to expect that, one of these days, some villain or other like the notary may take a fancy to them—perhaps the same man; and *then*, I suppose, you would tell me, as now, to be careful how I offended him, since he had me in his power. You say, if I displease him he can put me in prison. Now, tell the truth: you advise me, then, to leave my daughter at his mercy, do you not?"

And then, passing from the extreme of rage at the idea of all the wickedness practised by the notary to tender recollections of his child, the unhappy man burst into a sort of convulsive weeping, mingled with deep and heavy sobs, for his kindly nature could not long sustain the tone of sarcastic indignation he had assumed.

"Oh, my children!" cried he, with bitter grief; "my poor children! My good, my beautiful, too—too beautiful Louise! 'Tis from those rich gifts of nature all our troubles proceeded. Had you been less lovely, that man would never have pressed his money upon me. I am honest and hard-working; and if the jeweller had given me time, I should never

have been under the obligation to the old monster, of which he avails himself to seek to dishonour my child. I should not then have left her a single hour within his power. But I dare not remove her—I dare not! For am I not at his mercy? Oh, want! oh, misery! What insults do they not make us endure!"

"But what can you do?" asked Madeleine. "You know he threatens Louise that if she quits him he will put you in prison directly."

"Oh, yes! He dares address her as though she were the very vilest of creatures."

"Well, you must not mind that; for should she leave the notary, there is no doubt he would instantly throw you into prison, and then what would become of me, with these five helpless creatures and my mother? Suppose Louise did earn twenty francs a-month in another place, do you think seven persons can live on that?"

"And so that we may live, Louise is to be disgraced and left to ruin?"

"You always make things out worse than they are. It is true the notary makes offers of love to Louise; she has told us so repeatedly. But then you know what a good girl she is; she would never listen to him."

"She is good, indeed; and so right-minded, active, and industrious! When, seeing how badly we were off in consequence of your long illness, she insisted upon going to service that she might not be a burthen to us, did I not say what it cost me to part with her? To think of my sweet Louise being subjected to all the harshness and humiliation of a servant's life—she who was naturally so proud that we used jokingly (ah, we could joke then!) to call her the *Princess*, because she always said that, by dint of care and cleanliness, she would make our little home like a palace! Dear Louise! It would have been my greatest happiness to have kept her with me, though I had worked all day and all night too. And when

I saw her blooming face, with her bright eyes glancing at me as she sat beside my work-table, my labour always seemed lightened; and when she sung like a bird those little songs she knew I liked to hear, I used to fancy myself the happiest father alive. Poor dear Louise!—so hard-working, yet always so gay and lively! Why, she could even manage your mother, and make her do whatever she wished. But I defy any one to resist her sweet words or winning smile. And how she watched over and waited upon you! What pains she would take to try and divert you from thinking of what you suffered! And how tenderly she looked after her little brothers and sisters, finding time for every thing! Ah, with our Louise all our joy and happiness—all—all—left us!"

"Don't go on so, Morel! Don't remind me of all these things, or you will break my heart," cried Madeleine, weeping bitterly.

"And then when I think that, perhaps, that old monster—— Do you know, when that idea flashes across my brain, my senses seem disturbed; and I have but one thought, that of first killing him and then killing myself?"

"What would become of all of us if you were to do so? Besides, I tell you again, you make things worse than they really are. I daresay the notary was only joking with Louise. He is such a pious man, and goes so regularly to mass every Sunday, and only keeps company with priests folks say. Why, many people think that he is safer to place money with than the bank itself."

"Well, and what does all that prove? Merely that he is a rich hypocrite, instead of a poor one. I know well enough what a good girl Louise is. But then she loves us so tenderly, that it breaks her heart to see the want and wretchedness we are in. She knows well enough that if any thing were to happen to me you would all perish with hunger; and by threatening to put me into prison he might work on the dear child's mind—like a villain as he is—and persuade her, on our account——Oh God, my brain burns! I feel as though I were going mad!"

"But, Morel, if ever that were the case, the notary would be sure to make her a great number of fine presents or money; and, I am sure, she would not have kept them all to herself. She would certainly have brought part to us."

"Silence, woman! Let me hear no more such words escape your lips. Louise touch the wages of infamy! My good, my virtuous girl, accept such foul gifts! Oh, wife!"

"Not for herself, certainly. But, to bring to us, perhaps she would——"

"Madeleine," exclaimed Morel, excited almost to frenzy, "again, I say, let me not hear such language from your lips; you make me shudder. Heaven only knows what you and the children also would become were I taken away, if such are your principles."

"Why, what harm did I say?"

"Oh, none!"

"Then what makes you uneasy about Louise?"

The lapidary impatiently interrupted his wife by saying,—

"Because I have noticed for the last three months that, whenever Louise comes to see us, she seems embarrassed, and even confused. When

I take her in my arms and embrace her, as I have been used to do from her birth, she blushes."

"Ah, that is with delight at seeing you, or from shame. She seems sadder and more dejected, too, each visit she pays us."

"Because she finds our misery constantly increasing. Besides, when I spoke to her concerning the notary, she told me he had quite ceased his threats of putting you in prison."

"But did she tell you the price she has paid to induce him to lay aside his threats? She did not tell you that, I daresay—did she? Ah, a father's eye is not to be deceived; and her blushes and embarrassments when giving me her usual kiss make me dread I know not what! Why, would it not be an atrocious thing to say to a poor girl, whose bread depended on her employer's word, 'Either sacrifice your virtuous principles, and become what I would have you, or quit my house? And if any one should inquire of me respecting the character you have with me, I shall speak of you in such terms that no one will take you into their service.' Well, then, how much worse is it to frighten a fond and affectionate child into surrendering her innocence, by threatening to put her father into prison if she refused, when the brute knows that upon the labour of that father a whole family depends! Surely the earth contains nothing more infamous, more fiendlike than such conduct."

"Ah!" replied Madeleine; "and then only to think that with the value of one, only one of those diamonds now lying on your table, we might pay the notary all we owe him, and so take Louise out of his power and keep her at home with us! Don't you see, husband?"

"What is the use of your repeating the same thing over and over again? You might just as well tell me that if I were rich I should not be poor!" answered Morel, with sorrowful impatience. For such was the innate and almost constitutional honesty of this man, that it never once occurred that his weak-minded partner, bowed down and irritated by

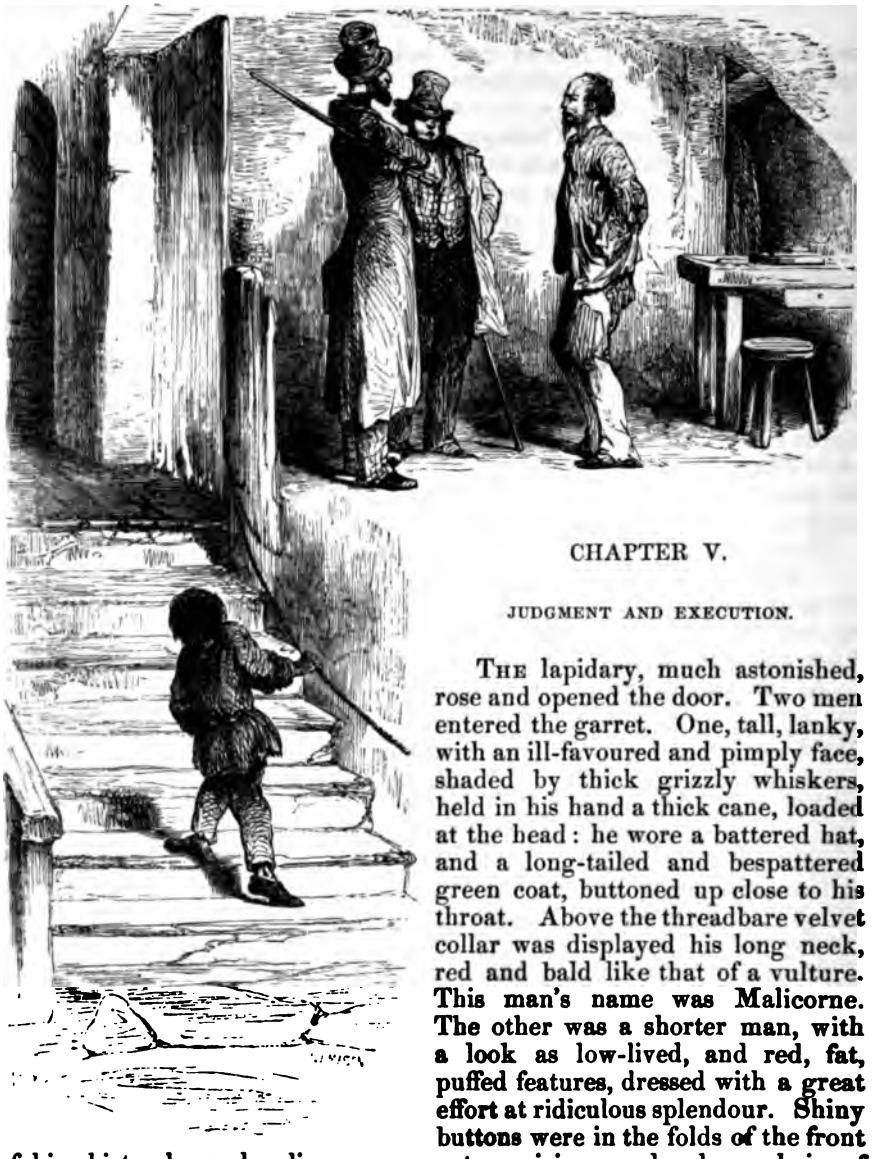
long suffering and want, could ever have conceived the idea of tempting him to a dishonourable appropriation of that which belonged to another.

With a heavy sigh, the unfortunate man resigned himself to his hard fate. "Thrice happy those parents who can retain their innocent children beneath the paternal roof, and defend them from the thousand snares laid to entrap their unsuspecting youth! But who is there to watch over the safety of the poor girl condemned at an early age to seek employment from home? Alas, no one! Directly she is capable of adding her mite to the family earnings, she leaves her dwelling at an early hour, and repairs to the manufactory where she may happen to be engaged. Meanwhile, both father and mother are too busily employed to have leisure to attend to their daughter's comings or goings. 'Our time is our stock in trade,' cry they, 'and bread is too dear to enable us to lay aside our work while we look after our children!' And then there is an outcry raised as to the quantity of depraved females constantly to be met with, and of the impropriety of conduct among those of the lower orders; wholly forgetting that the parents have neither the means of keeping them at home, nor of watching over their morals when away from them."

Thus mentally moralised Morel. Then, speaking aloud, he added,—

"After all, our greatest privation is when forced to quit our parents, wives, or children. It is to the poor that family affection is most comforting and beneficial. Yet, directly our children grow up, and are capable of becoming our dearest companions, we are forced to part with them."

At this moment some one knocked loudly at the door.



CHAPTER V.

JUDGMENT AND EXECUTION.

The lapidary, much astonished, rose and opened the door. Two men entered the garret. One, tall, lanky, with an ill-favoured and pimply face, shaded by thick grizzly whiskers, held in his hand a thick cane, loaded at the head: he wore a battered hat, and a long-tailed and bespattered green coat, buttoned up close to his throat. Above the threadbare velvet collar was displayed his long neck, red and bald like that of a vulture. This man's name was Malicorne. The other was a shorter man, with a look as low-lived, and red, fat, puffed features, dressed with a great effort at ridiculous splendour. Shiny buttons were in the folds of the front of his shirt, whose cleanliness was most suspicious, and a long chain of mosaic gold serpentined down a faded plaid waistcoat, which was seen beneath his seedy Chesterfield, of a yellowish grey colour. This gentleman's name was Bourdin.

"How poverty-stricken this hole smells!" said Malicorne, pausing on the threshold.

"Why, it does not scent of lavender-water! Confound it, but we have a lowish customer to deal with!" responded Bourdin, with a gesture of disgust and contempt; and then advanced towards the artisan, who was looking at him with as much surprise as indignation.

Through the door, left a little ajar, might be seen the villanous,

watchful, and cunning face of the young scamp Tortillard, who, having followed these strangers unknown to them, was sneaking after, spying, and listening to them.

"What do you want?" inquired the lapidary abruptly, disgusted at the coarseness of these fellows.

"Jérome Morel?" said Bourdin.

"I am he!"

"Working lapidary?"

"Yes."

"You're quite sure?"

"Quite sure. But you are troublesome, so tell me at once your business, or leave the room."

"Really your politeness is remarkable! much obliged! I say, Malicorne," said the man, turning to his comrade, "there's not so much *fat* to cut at here, as there was at that 'ere Viscount de Saint-Rémy's."

"I believe you; but, when there is *fat*, why the door's kept shut in your face, as we found in the Rue de Chaillot. The bird had hopped the twig, and precious quick, too! whilst such vermin as these hold on to their cribs like a snail to his shell."

"I believe you; well, the *stone jug* just suits such individuals."

"The *sufferer* (creditor) must be a good fellow, for it will cost him more than its worth: but that's his look-out."

"If," said Morel, angrily, "you were not drunk, as you seem to be, I should be angry with you. Leave this apartment instantly!"

"Ha! ha! he's a fine fellow with his elegant curve," said Bourdin, making an insulting allusion to the contorted figure of the poor lapidary. "I say, Malicorne, he has *cheek* enough to call this an *apartment*, a hole in which I would not put my dog."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed Madeleine, who had been so frightened that she could not say a word before. "Call for assistance, perhaps they are rogues. Take care of your diamonds!"

And, seeing these two ill-looking strangers come closer to his working-bench, on which his precious stones were still lying, Morel, fearful of some evil intentions, ran towards the table, and covered the jewels with his two hands.

Tortillard, still on the watch, caught at Madeleine's words, observed the movement of the artisan, and said to himself,—

"Ha! ha! ha! so they said he was a lapidary of sham stones; if they were mock he would not be afraid of being robbed: this is a good thing to know. So Mother Mathieu, who comes here so often, is a matcher of *real* stones after all, and has real diamonds in her basket: this is a good thing to know, and I'll tell the Chouette," added Bras Rouge's brat.

"If you do not leave this room, I will call in the guard," said Morel.

The children, alarmed at this scene, began to cry, and the idiotic mother sat up in her bed.

"If any one has a right to call for the guard, it is we, you Mister Twistabout," said Bourdin.

"And the guard would lend us a hand to carry you off to gaol if you resist," added Malicorne. "We have not the magistrate with us, it is true, but, if you have any wish for his company, we'll find you one, just out of bed, hot and heavy; Bourdin will go and fetch him."

"To prison! me?" exlaimed Morel, struck with dismay.

"Yes, to Clichy."

"To Clichy?" repeated the artisan, with an air of despair.

"It seems a hardish pill," said Malicorne.

"Well, then, to the Debtors' Jail, if you like that better," said Bourdin.

"You—what—indeed—why—the notary—ah, *mon Dieu!*"

And the workman, pale as death, fell on his stool, unable to add another word.

"We are bound bailiffs, come to lay hold of you; now, are you *fly?*"

"Morel, it is the note of Louise's master! we are undone!" exclaimed Madeleine, in a tone of agony.

"Hear the judgment," said Malicorne, taking from his dirty and crammed pocket-book a stamped writ.

After having skimmed over, according to custom, a part of this document in an unintelligible tone, he distinctly articulated the last words, which were, unfortunately, but too important to the artisan:—

"'*Judgment finally given. The Tribunal condemns Jérome Morel to*

pay to Pierre Petit-Jean, merchant, by every available means, even to the arrest of body, the sum of one thousand three hundred francs, with interest from the day of protest, and to pay all other and extra costs. Given and judged at Paris, thirteenth September, &c. &c.'*"

"And Louise! Louise!" cried Morel, almost distracted in his brain, and apparently unheeding the long preamble which had just been read. "Where is Louise, then, for, doubtless, she has quitted the notary, since he sends me to prison? My child! my Louise! what has become of you?"

"Who the devil is Louise?" asked Bourdin.

"Let him alone!" replied Malicorne, brutally; "don't you see the respectable old twaddler is not right in his nonsense-box?" Then, approaching Morel, he added, "I say, my fine fellow, right about file! march on! let us get out of here, will you, and have a little fresh air? you stink enough to poison a cat in this here hole!"

"Morel!" shrieked Madeleine, wildly, "don't go! kill those wretches! oh, you coward not to knock them down! What! are you going to let them take you away? are you going to abandon us all?"

"Pray don't put yourself out of the way, ma'am," said Bourdin, with an ironical grin. "I've only just got to remark, that if your good man lays his little finger on me, why, I'll make him remember it," continued he, swinging his loaded stick round and round.

Entirely occupied with thoughts of Louise, Morel scarcely heard a word of what was passing. All at once an expression of bitter satisfaction passed over his countenance, as he said,—

"Louise has doubtless left the notary's house; now I shall go to prison willingly." Then, casting a troubled look around him, he exclaimed, "But my wife! her mother! the children! who will provide for them? No one will trust me with stones to work at in prison, for it will be supposed my bad conduct has sent me there. Does this hard-hearted notary wish the destruction of myself and all my family also?"

"Once, twice, old chap," said Bourdin, "will you stop your gammon? you are enough to bore a man to death. Come, put on your things, and let us be off."

"Good gentlemen, kind gentlemen," cried Madeleine, from her sick bed, "pray forgive what I said just now! Surely you will not be so cruel as to take my husband away; what will become of me, and my five poor children, and my old mother, who is an idiot?—there she lies, you see her, poor old creature! huddled up on her mattrass; she is quite out of her senses, my good gentlemen; she is, indeed, quite mad!"

"La! what, that old bald-headed thing a woman? well, hang me if that ain't enough to astonish a man!"

"I'll be hanged if it isn't, then!" cried the other bailiff, bursting into a horselaugh; "why, I took it for something tied up in an old sack. Look! her old head is shaved quite close; it seems as though she had got a white skull-cap on."

* The cunning notary, unable to prosecute in his own name, had made the unfortunate Morel give a blank acceptance, and had filled up the note of hand with the name of a third party.

"Go, children, and kneel down, and beg of these good gentlemen not to take away your poor father, our only support," said Madeleine, anxious by a last effort to touch the hearts of the bailiffs. But, spite of their mother's orders, the terrified children remained weeping on their miserable mattrass.

At the unusual noise which prevailed, added to the aspect of two strange men in the room, the poor idiot turned herself towards the wall, as though striving to hide from them, uttering all the time the most discordant cries and moans. Morel, meanwhile, appeared unconscious of all that was going on: this last stroke of Fate had been so frightful and unexpected, and the consequences of his arrest were so dreadful, that his mind seemed almost unequal to understanding its reality. Worn out by all manner of privations and exhausted by over-toil, his strength utterly forsook him, and he remained seated on his stool, pale, haggard, and as though incapable of speech or motion, his head drooping on his breast, and his arms hanging listlessly by his side.

"Deuce take me," cried Malicorne, "if that old patterer is not going fast asleep! Why, I say, my chap, you seem to think nothing of keeping gen'lmen like us waiting; just remember, will you, our time is precious! you know this is not exactly a party of pleasure, so march, or I shall be obliged to make you."

Suiting the action to the word, the man grasped the artisan by the shoulder, and shook him roughly; which so alarmed the children, that, unable to restrain their terror, the three little boys emerged from their *paillasse*, and, half naked as they were, came in an agony of tears to throw themselves at the feet of the bailiffs, holding up their clasped hands, and crying, in tones of touching earnestness,—

"Pray, pray don't hurt our dear father!"

At the sight of these poor, shivering, half-clad infants, weeping with affright, and trembling with cold, Bourdin, spite of his natural callousness and long acquaintance with scenes of this sort, could not avoid a feeling, almost resembling compassion, from stealing over him, while his pitiless companion, brutally disengaging himself from the grasp of the small, weak creatures who were clinging to him, exclaimed,—

"Hands off, you young ragamuffins! A devilish fine trade ours would be, if we were to allow ourselves to be mauled about by a set of beggars' brats like you!"

As though the scene were not sufficiently distressing, a fearful addition was made to its horrors—the eldest of the little girls, who had remained in the *paillasse* with her sick sister, suddenly exclaimed,—

"Mother! mother! I don't know what's the matter with Adèle—she is so cold, and her eyes are fixed on my face, and yet she does not breathe."

The poor little child, whose consumptive appearance we have before noticed, had expired gently, and without a sigh, her looks fixed earnestly on the sister she so tenderly loved.

No language can describe the cry which burst from the lips of the lapidary's wife at these words, which at once revealed the dreadful truth; it was one of those wild, despairing, convulsive shrieks, which seem to sever the very heart-strings of a mother.

"My poor little sister looks as though she were dead!" continued the child; "she frightens me with her eyes fixed on me, and her face so cold!"

Saying which, in an agony of terror she leaped from beside the corpse of the infant, and ran to shelter herself in her mother's arms, while the distracted parent, forgetting that her almost paralysed limbs were incapable of supporting her, made a violent effort to rise and go to the assistance of her child, whom she could not believe was actually past recovery; but her strength failed her, and with a deep sigh of despair she sunk upon the floor. That cry found an echo in the heart of Morel, and roused him from his stupor: he sprung with one bound to the *paillasse*, and withdrew from it the stiffened form of an infant of four years old, dead and cold. Want and misery had accelerated its end, although its complaint, which had originated in the positive want of common necessaries, was beyond the reach of any human aid to remove: its poor little limbs were already rigid with death. Morel, whose very hair seemed to stand on end with despair and terror, stood holding his dead child in his arms, motionlessly contemplating its thin features with a fixed bloodshot gaze, though no tear moistened his dry, burning eyeballs.

"Morel! Morel! give Adèle to me!" cried the unhappy mother, extending her arms towards him; "she is not dead—it is not possible! Let me have her, and I shall be able to warm her in my arms."

The curiosity of the idiot was excited by observing the pertinacity with which the bailiffs kept close to the lapidary, who would not part with the body of his child. She ceased her yells and cries, and, rising from her mattrass, approached gently, and protruded her hideous, senseless countenance over Morel's shoulder, staring in vacant wonder at the pale corpse of her grandchild, the features of the idiot retaining their

usual expression of stupid sullenness. At the end of a few minutes she uttered a sort of horrible yawning noise, almost resembling the roar of a famished animal; then, hurrying back to her mattrass, she threw herself upon it, exclaiming,—

"Hungry! hungry!! hungry!!!"

"Well, gentlemen," said the poor, half-crazed artisan, with haggard looks, "you see all that is left me of my poor child, my Adèle—we called her Adèle, she was so pretty she deserved a pretty name; and she was just four years old last night. Ay, and this morning even I kissed her; and she put her little arms about my neck, and embraced me—oh, so fondly! And now, you see, gentlemen, perhaps you will tell me there is one mouth less to feed, and that I am lucky to get rid of one—you think so, don't you?"

The unfortunate man's reason was fast giving way under the many shocks he had received.

"Morel," cried Madeleine, "give me my child! I will have her!"

"To be sure," replied the lapidary; "that is only fair. Every body ought to secure their own happiness!" So saying, he laid the child in its mother's arms, and uttering a groan, such as comes only from a breaking heart, he covered his face with his hands; while Madeleine, almost as frenzied as her husband, placed the body of her child amid the straw of her wretched bed, watching it with frantic jealousy, while the other children, kneeling around her, filled the air with their wailings.

The bailiffs, who had experienced a temporary feeling of compassion at the death of the child, soon fell back into their accustomed brutality.

"I say, friend," said Malicorne to the lapidary, "your child is dead, and there's an end of it! I dare say you think it a misfortune; but then, you see, we are all mortal, and neither we nor you can bring it back to life. So come along with us; for, to tell you the truth, we're upon the scent of a spicy one we must nab to-day. So don't delay us, that's a trump!"

But Morel heard not a word he said. Entirely preoccupied with his own sad thoughts, the bewildered man kept up a kind of wandering delivery of his own afflicting ideas.

"My poor Adèle!" murmured he; "we must now see about laying you in the grave, and watching by her little corpse till the people come to carry it to its last home—to lay it in the ground. But how are we to do that without a coffin—and where shall we get one? Who will give me credit for one? Oh, a very small coffin will do—only for a little creature of four years of age! And we shall want no bearers! Oh no, I can carry it under my arm. Ha! ha! ha!" added he, with a burst of frightful mirth, "what a good thing it is she did not live to be as old as Louise! I never could have persuaded any body to trust me for a coffin large enough for a girl of eighteen years of age."

"I say, just look at that chap!" said Bourdin to Malicorne. "I'll be dashed if I don't think as he's a-going mad, like the old woman there! Only see how he rolls his eyes about—enough to frighten one! Come, I say, let's make haste and be off. Only hark how that idiot creature is a-roaring for something to eat! Well, they are rum customers, from beginning to end!"

"We must get done with them as soon as we can. Although the law only allows us 76 francs, 75 centièmes, for arresting this beggar, yet, in

justice to ourselves, we must swell the costs to 240 or 250 francs. You know the sufferer (the creditor) pays us!"

"You mean, advances the cash. Old Gaffer there will have to pay the piper, since he must dance to the music."

"Well, by the time he has paid his creditor two thousand five hundred francs for debt, interest, and expenses, &c., he'll find it pretty warm work."

"A devilish sight more than we do our job up here! I'm a'most frost-bitten!" cried the bailiff, blowing the ends of his fingers. "Come, old fellow, make haste, will you! Just look sharp! you can snivel, you know, as we go along. Why, how the devil can we help it, if your brat has kicked the bucket?"

"These beggars always have such a lot of children, if they have nothing else!"

"Yes, so they have," responded Malicorne. Then, slapping Morel on the shoulder, he called out in a loud voice, "I tell you what it is, my friend, we're not going to be kept dawdling here all day—our time is precious. So either out with the stumpy, or march off to prison, without any more bother!"

"Prison!" exclaimed a clear youthful voice: "take M. Morel to prison!" and a bright, beaming face appeared at the door.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried the weeping children, as they recognised the happy, healthful countenance of their young protectress and friend, "these wicked men are going to take our poor father away, and put him in prison! and sister Adèle is just dead!"

"Dead!" cried the kind-hearted girl, her dark eyes filling with compassionating tears: "poor little thing! But it cannot be true that your father is in danger of a prison;" and, almost stupefied with surprise, she gazed alternately from the children to Morel, and from him to the bailiffs.

"I say, my girl," said Bourdin, approaching Rigolette, "as you do seem to have the use of your senses, just make this good man hear reason, will you? His child has just died. Well, that can't be helped now; but, you see, he is a-keeping of us, because we're a-waiting to take him to the debtors' prison, being sheriffs' officers, duly sworn in and appointed. Tell him so!"

"Then it *is* true!" exclaimed the feeling girl.

"True? I should say it was, and no mistake! Now, don't you see, while the mother is busy with the dead babby (and, bless you! she's got it there, hugging it up in bed, and won't part with it!), she won't notice us? So I want the father to be off while she isn't thinking nothing about it!"

"Good God! good God!" replied Rigolette, in deep distress, "what is to be done?"

"Done? why, pay the money, or go to prison! There is nothing between them two ways. If you happen to have two or three thousand francs by you you can oblige him with, why, shell out, and we'll be off, and glad enough to be gone!"

"How can you," cried Rigolette, "be so barbarous as to make a jest of such distress as this?"

"Well, then," rejoined the other man, "all joking apart, if you really do wish to be useful, try to prevent the woman from seeing us take her husband away. You will spare them both a very disagreeable ten minutes!"

Coarse as was this counsel, it was not destitute of good sense; and Rigolette, feeling she could do nothing else, approached the bedside of Madeleine, who, distracted by her grief, appeared unconscious of the presence of Rigolette, as, gathering the children together, she knelt with them beside their afflicted mother.

Meanwhile Morel, upon recovering from his temporary wildness, had sunk into a state of deep and bitter reflections upon his present position, which, now that his mind saw things through a calmer medium, only increased the poignancy of his sufferings. Since the notary had proceeded to such extremities, any hope from his mercy was vain. He felt there was nothing left but to submit to his fate, and let the law take its course.

"Are we ever to get off?" inquired Bourdin. "I tell you what, my man, if you are not for marching, we must make you, that's all."

"I cannot leave these diamonds about in this manner—my wife is half distracted," cried Morel, pointing to the stones lying on his work-table. "The person for whom I am polishing them will come to fetch them away either this morning or during the day. They are of considerable value."

"Capital!" whispered Tortillard, who was still peeping in at the half-closed door; "capital, capital! What *will* Mother Chouette say when I tell her this bit of luck?"

"Only give me till to-morrow," said Morel, beseechingly; "only till I can return these diamonds to my employer."

"I tell you, the thing can't be done. So let's have no more to say about it."

"But it is impossible for me to leave diamonds of such value as these exposed, to be lost or even stolen in my absence."

"Well then, take them along with you. We have got a coach waiting below, for which you will have to pay when you settle the costs. We will go altogether to your employer's house, and, if you don't meet with him, why, then, you can deposit these jewels at the office of the prison, where they will be as safe as in the bank — only look sharp, and let's be off, before your wife and children perceive us."

"Give me but till to-morrow—only to bury my child!" implored Morel, in a supplicating voice, half stifled by the heavy sobs he strove in vain to repress.

"Nonsense, I tell you; why, we have lost an hour here already!"

"Besides, it's dull work going to berrins," chimed in Malicorne. "It would be too much for your feelings, p'raps!"

"Yes," said Morel, bitterly; "it is dull work to see what we would have given our lives to save laid in the cold earth. But, as you are men, grant me that satisfaction." Then, looking up, and observing the nonchalant air with which his prayer was received, he added, "But no, persons of so much feeling as you are would fear to indulge me, lest I should find it a gloomy sight. Well, then, at least grant me one word!"

"The deuce take your last words! Why, old chap, there seems no end to them. Come, put the steam on—make haste," said Malicorne, with brutal impatience, "or we shall lose t'other gent we're after."

"When did you receive orders to arrest me?"

"Oh, why judgment was signed four months ago! But it was only yesterday our officer got instructions to put it in execution."

"Only yesterday! And why has it been delayed so long?"

"How the devil should I know? Come, look about you, and put up your things."

"Only yesterday? And during the whole day we saw nothing of Louise! Where can she be? or what has become of her?" inquired the lapidary mentally, as he took from his table a small box filled with cotton, in which he placed his stones. "But never mind all that now. I shall have plenty of time to think about it when I am in prison."

"Come, look sharp there a bit. Tie up your things to take with you, and put your clothes on, there's a fine fellow!"

"I have no clothes to tie up, and have nothing whatever to take with me except these jewels, that I may deposit them at the office of the prison."

"Well, then, dress yourself as quick as you can."

"I have no other dress than that you now see me in."

"I say mate," cried Bourdin, "does he really mean to be seen in our company with such rags as those on?"

"I fear, indeed, I shall shame such gentlemen as you are!" said Morel, bitterly.

"It don't much signify," replied Malicorne, "as nobody will see us in the coach."

"Father!" cried one of the children, "mother is calling for you!"

"Listen to me!" said Morel, addressing one of the men with hurried tones; "if one spark of human pity dwells within you, grant me one favour! I have not the courage to bid my wife and children farewell; it would break my heart! and, if they see you take me away, they will try to follow me. I wish to spare all this. Therefore, I beseech you to say, in a loud voice, that you will come again in three or four days, and pretend to go away. You can wait for me at the next landing-place, and I will come to you in less than five minutes: that will spare all the misery of taking leave. I am quite sure it would be too much for me, and that I should become mad! I was not far off it a little while ago!"

"Not to be caught!" answered Malicorne; "you want to do me! but I'm up to you! You mean to give us the slip, you old chouse!"

"God of heaven!" cried Morel, with a mixture of grief and indignation, "has it come to this?"

"I don't think he means what you say," whispered Bourdin to his companion: "let us do what he asks; we shall never get away unless we do. I'll stand outside the door; there is no other way of escaping from this garret; he cannot get away from us."

"Very well. But what a dog-hole! what a place for a man to care about leaving! Why, a prison will be a palace to it!" Then, addressing Morel, he said, "Now, then, be quick, and we will wait for you on the next landing! so make up some pretence for our going."

"Well," said Bourdin, "in a loud voice, and bestowing a significant look on the unhappy artisan, "since things are as you say, and as you

think you shall be able to pay us in a short time, why, we shall leave you for the present, and return in about four or five days; but you must not disappoint us then, remember!"

"Thank you, gentlemen. I have no doubt I shall be able to pay you then."

The bailiffs then withdrew, while Tortillard, hearing the men talk of quitting the room, had hastened down stairs for fear of being detected listening.

"There, Madame Morel!" said Rigolette, endeavouring to draw the wife of the lapidary from the state of gloomy abstraction into which she had fallen, "do you hear that? the men have gone, and left your husband undisturbed."

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed the children, joyfully, "they have not taken father away!"

"Morel! Morel!" murmured Madeleine, her brain quite turned, "take one of those diamonds—take the largest—and sell it, no one will know it, and then we shall be delivered from our misery; poor little Adèle will get warm then, and come back to us."

Taking advantage of the instant when no one was observing him, the lapidary profited by it to steal from the room. One of the men was waiting for him on the little landing-place, which was also covered only by the roof; on this small spot opened the door of a garret, which adjoined the apartment occupied by the Morels, and in which M. Pipelet kept his dépôt of leather; and, further, this little angular recess, in which a person could not stand upright, was dignified by the melancholy porter with the name of his *Melodramatic Cabinet*, because, by means of a hole between the lath and plaster, he frequently indulged in the luxury of woe by witnessing the many touching scenes occasioned by the distress of the wretched family who dwelt in the garret beyond it. This door had not escaped the lynx eye of the bailiff, who had, for a time, suspected his prisoner of intending either to escape or conceal himself by means of it.

"Now, then, let us make a start of it!" cried he, beginning to descend the stairs as Morel emerged from the garret. "Rather a ragged recruit to march with!" added he, beckoning to the lapidary to follow him.

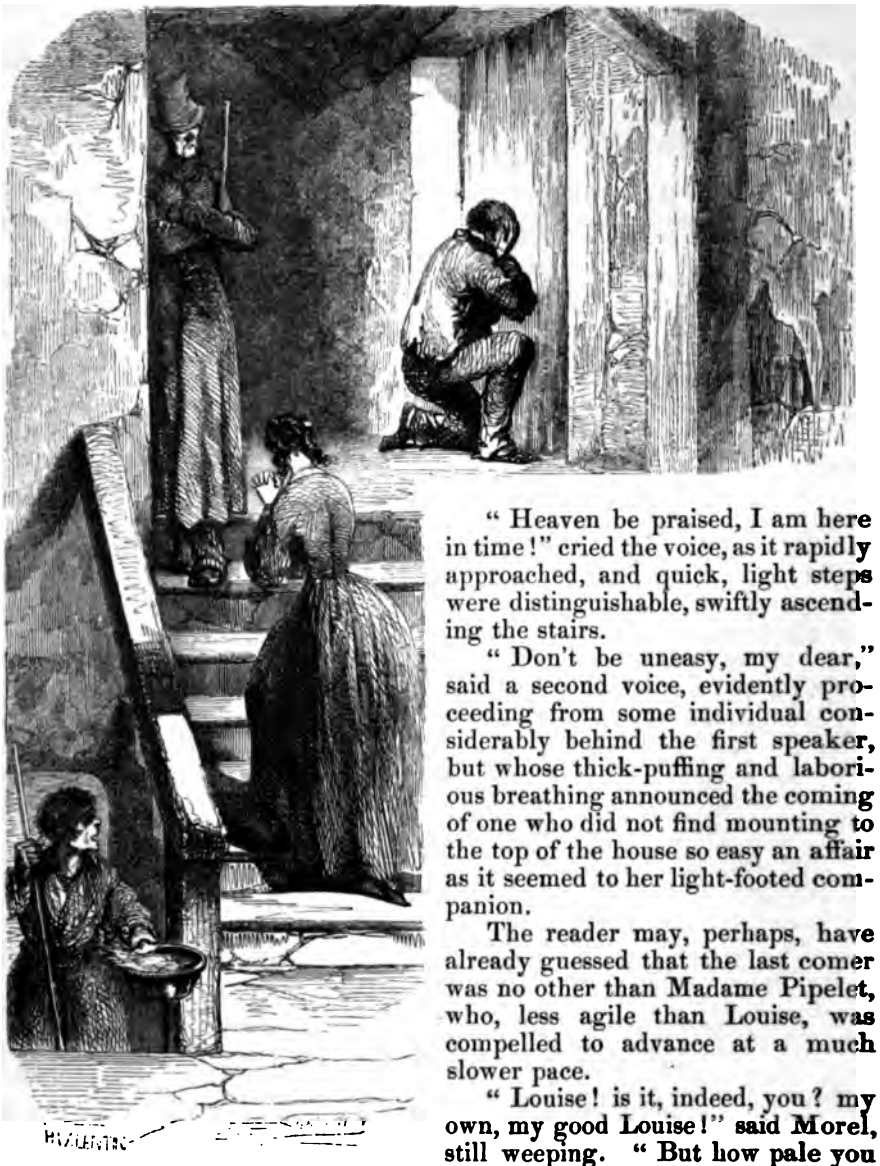
"Only an instant, one single instant, for the love of God!" exclaimed Morel, as, kneeling down, he cast a last look on his wife and children through a chink in the door. Then, clasping his hands, he said, in a low, heart-broken voice, while bitter tears flowed down his haggard cheeks,—

"Adieu, my poor children! my wife! may Heaven preserve you all! Farewell! farewell!"

"Come, don't get preaching!" said Bourdin, coarsely, "or your sermons may keep us here till night, which is what I can't stand, for I am almost *froze* to death as it is. Ugh! what a kennel! what a hole!"

Morel rose from his knees, and was about to follow the bailiff, when the words, "Father! father!" sounded up the staircase.

"Louise!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his hands towards heaven in a transport of gratitude; "thank God I shall be able to embrace you before I go!"



" Heaven be praised, I am here in time!" cried the voice, as it rapidly approached, and quick, light steps were distinguishable, swiftly ascending the stairs.

" Don't be uneasy, my dear," said a second voice, evidently proceeding from some individual considerably behind the first speaker, but whose thick-puffing and laborious breathing announced the coming of one who did not find mounting to the top of the house so easy an affair as it seemed to her light-footed companion.

The reader may, perhaps, have already guessed that the last comer was no other than Madame Pipelet, who, less agile than Louise, was compelled to advance at a much slower pace.

" Louise! is it, indeed, you? my own, my good Louise!" said Morel, still weeping. " But how pale you look! for mercy's sake, my child, what is the matter?"

" Nothing, father, nothing, I assure you!" said Louise, in much agitation; " but I have run so fast! See, I have brought the money!"

" What?"

" You are free!"

" You knew, then, that ——"

" Oh, yes! Here, sir! you will find it quite right," said the poor girl, placing a rouleau of gold in the hands of Malicorne.

" But this money, Louise,—how did you become possessed of it?"

"I will tell you all about it by and by: pray do not be uneasy; let us go and comfort my mother. Come, father."

"No, not just this minute!" cried Morel, remembering that, as yet, Louise was entirely ignorant of the death of her little sister; "wait an instant, I have something to say to you first. But about this money?"

"All right," said Malicorne, as, having finished counting the gold, he put it in his pocket; "precisely one thousand three hundred francs. And is that all you have got for me, my pretty dear?"

"I thought, father," said Louise, struck with alarm and surprise at the man's question, "that you only owed one thousand three hundred francs?"

"Nor do I," replied Morel.

"Precisely so!" answered the bailiff; "the original debt is one thousand three hundred francs; well, that is all right now, and we may put 'settled' against that: but then, you see, there are the costs, caption, &c. &c. amounting to eleven hundred and forty francs, still to be paid."

"Gracious Heaven!" cried Louise, "I thought one thousand three hundred francs would pay every thing! But, sir, we will make up the money, and bring it to you very soon; take this for the present, it is a good sum; take it as paid on account: it will go towards the debt, at least, won't it father?"

"Very well; then all you have to do is to bring the required sum to the prison, and then, and not till then, your father—if he is your father—will be set at liberty. Come, master, we must start, or we never shall get there."

"Do you really mean to take him away?"

"Do I? don't I? Just look here: I am ready to give you a memorandum of having received so much on account; and, whenever you bring the rest, you shall have a receipt in full, and your father along with it. There, now, that's a handsome offer, ain't it?"

"Mercy! mercy!" supplicated Louise.

"Whew!" cried the man, "here's a scene over again! My stars, I hope this one isn't a-going mad, too, for the whole family seems uncommon queer about the head! Well, I declare I never see any thing like it! it is enough to set a man *prespiring* in the midst of winter!" and here the bailiff burst into a loud, coarse laugh at his own brutal wit.

"Oh, my poor, dear father!" exclaimed Louise, almost distractedly; "when I had hoped to have saved you!"

"No, no!" cried the lapidary, in a tone of utter despair, and stamping his foot in wild desperation, "hope nothing for me; God has forgotten me, and Heaven has ceased to be just to a wretch like me!"

"Calm yourself, my worthy friend," said a rich, manly voice; "there is always a kind Providence that watches over and preserves good and honest men like you."

At the same instant Rodolph appeared at the door of the small recess we have spoken of, from whence he had been an invisible spectator of much that we have related: he was pale, and extremely agitated. At this sudden apparition the bailiff drew back with surprise; while Morel and his daughter gazed on the stranger with bewildered wonder. Taking

from his waistcoat-pocket a quantity of folded bank-notes, Rodolph selected three, and, presenting them to Malicorne, he said,—

"Here are two hundred thousand five hundred francs; give this young woman back the money you have just received from her."

Still more and more astonished at this singular interference, the man half hesitated to take the notes, and, when he had received them, he eyed them with the utmost suspicion, turning and twisting them about in every direction; at length, satisfied both as to their reality and genuineness, he finally deposited them in his pocket-book: but, as his surprise and alarm began to subside, so did his natural coarseness of idea return, and, eyeing Rodolph from head to foot with an impertinent stare, he exclaimed,—

"The notes are right enough; but pray who and what are you that go about with such sums? I should just wish to know whose it is, and how you came by it?"

Rodolph was very plainly dressed, and his appearance by no means improved by the dust and dirt his clothes had gathered during his stay in M. Pipelet's *Cabinet of Melodrama*.

"I desired you to give back the gold you received just now from this young person," replied Rodolph, in a severe and authoritative tone.

"You *desired* me! and who the devil are you, to give your orders?" answered the man, approaching Rodolph in a threatening manner.

"Give back the gold!—give it back, I say!" said the prince, grasping the wrist of Malicorne so tightly that the unhappy bailiff winced beneath his iron clutch.

"I say," bawled he, "hands off, will you? Curse me if I don't think you're old Nick himself! I am sure your fingers are cased with iron."

"Then return the money! Why, you despicable wretch! do you want to be paid twice over? Now return the gold and begone, or, if you utter one insolent word, I'll fling you over the banisters!"

"Well, don't kick up such a row! there's the girl's money," said Malicorne, giving back to Louise the rouleau he had received. "But mind what you are about, my sparky, and don't think to ill-use me because you happen to be the strongest!"

"That's right!" said Bourdin, ensconcing himself behind his taller associate. "And who are you, I should like to know, who give yourself such airs?"

"Who is he? why my lodger, my king of lodgers, you ill-looking, half-starved, hungry hounds! you ill-taught, dirty fellows!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, who, puffing and panting for breath, had at last reached the landing where they stood; her head, as usual, adorned with her Brutus wig, which, during the heat and bustle she had experienced in ascending the stairs, had got pushed somewhat awry; while in her hand she bore an earthen stewpan, filled with smoking-hot broth, which she was charitably conveying to the Morels.

"What the devil does this old hedgehog want?" cried Bourdin.

"If you dare make any of your saucy speeches about me," returned Madame Pipelet, "I'll make you feel my nails—ay, and my teeth, too, if you provoke me! And, if you don't mend your manners, my lodger, my king of lodgers, will pitch you over the banisters, and I will sweep you out into the street, as I would a heap of rubbish."

"This old beldame will bring the whole house about our ears," said Bourdin to Malicorne; "we've touched the blunt, our expenses and all, so I say 'Off' is a good word."

"Here, take your property," said the latter, flinging a bundle of law-papers at the feet of Morel.

"Pick them up, and deliver them decently; you have been paid as a respectable officer would have been, act like one!" cried Rodolph, seizing the bailiff vigorously with one hand, while with the other he pointed to the papers.

Fully convinced by this second powerful grip how useless any attempt at resistance would prove, the bailiff stooped down, and, mechanically picking up the papers, gave them to Morel, who, scarcely venturing to credit his senses, believed himself under the influence of a delightful dream.

"Well, young chap," grumbled out Malicorne, "although you have got a fist as strong as a drayman's, mind you, if ever you fall into my clutches, I'll make you smart for this!" So saying, he doubled his fist at Rodolph, and then scrambled down the stairs, taking four or five at a time, followed by his companion, who kept looking behind him with indescribable terror; while Madame Pipelet, burning to avenge the insults offered to her king of lodgers, looked at her streaming stewpan with an air of inspiration, and heroically exclaimed,—

"The debts of the Morels are paid! Henceforward they will have plenty of food, and can do without my messes! Look out there below!"

So saying, she stooped over the banisters, and poured the contents of

her stewpan down the backs and shoulders of the two bailiffs, who had just reached the first-floor landing.

"There goes!" screamed out the delighted porteress; "capital! ha, ha, ha! there they are! two regular sops in the pan! Well, I do enjoy this!"

"What the devil is this?" exclaimed Malicorne, thoroughly soaked with the hot, greasy liquid. "I say, I wish you would mind what you are about up there, you old figure of fun!"

"Alfred!" bawled Madame Pipelet, in a tone sharp and shrill enough to have split the tympanum of a deaf man,—"Alfred, my old darling! have at 'em! they wanted to behave ill to your Stasie (Anastasie)! the nasty fellows have been taking liberties—quite violent! Knock them down with your broom! and call the oyster-woman, and the man at the wine-vaults, to help you! Get out you!—get—get—get out! cht, cht, cht! —thieves! thieves! robbers!—cht—b-r-r-r-r-r-r—hou, hou, hou! Knock them—knock them down! that's right, old dear! pay them off! break their bones! serve them out! Boum, boum, boum!"

And, by way of conclusion to this concatenation of discordant noises,

accompanied by a constant succession of stamping and kicking of feet, Madame Pipelet, carried away by the excitement of the moment, flung her earthen stewpan to the bottom of the staircase, which, breaking into a thousand pieces at the very instant that the two bailiffs, terrified by the yells and noises from overhead, were precipitately descending the stairs with hasty strides, added not a little to their terror.

"Ah, ah, ah!" cried Anastasie, bursting into loud fits of laughter. "Now be off with you—I think you have had enough!" Then, crossing her arms, she stood, like a triumphant Amazon, rejoicing in the victory she had achieved.

While Madame Pipelet was thus venting her rage upon the bailiffs, Morel had thrown himself, in heartfelt gratitude, at the feet of Rodolph.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed he, when at last words came to his assistance, "you have saved a whole family! To whom do we owe this unhoped-for assistance?"

"'*To the God who watches over and protects all honest men,*' as your immortal Béranger says."

Note.—The following are some curious particulars relative to bodily restraint, as cited in the "Pauvre Jacques," a journal published under the patronage of the "Society for the Furtherance and Protection of Christianity:"—

(Prison Committee.) (*Comité des Prisons.*)

"A protest and intimation of bodily restraint are generally carried about by sheriffs' officers, and charged by law, the first, 4*f.* 35*c.*, the second, 4*f.* 70*c.*; for these, however, the officers usually demand, for the former, 10*f.* 40*c.*, for the second, 16*f.* 40*c.*; thus illegally claiming from the unfortunate victims of the law 26*f.* 80*c.*, for that which is fixed by that very law at 9*f.* 50*c.*

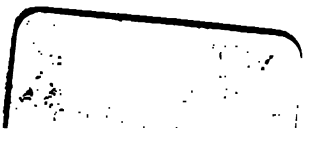
"For an arrest, the legal charge is, including stamp and registering, 3*f.* 50*c.*; coach-hire, 5*f.*; for arrest and entry in the prison books, 60*f.* 25*c.*; office dues, 8*f.* Total, 76*f.* 75*c.* A bill of the usual scale ordinarily charged by sheriffs' officers, now lying before us, shews that these allowances by law are magnified by the extortion of the officers into a sum of about 240*f.*, instead of the 76*f.* they are alone entitled to claim."

The same journal says:—"Sheriffs' officer * * * * has been to our office, requesting us to correct an article which appeared in one of our numbers, headed, '*A woman hung.*' 'I did not hang the woman!' observed he, angrily. We did not assert that he did, but, to prevent any further misapprehension, content ourselves with reprinting the paragraph in question:—'A few days ago, a sheriff's officer, named * * * *, went to the Rue de la Lune, to arrest a carpenter, who dwelt there. The man, perceiving him from the street, rushed hastily into his house, exclaiming, 'I am a ruined man! the officers are here to arrest me!' His wife, at these words, hastened to secure the door; while the carpenter ran to a room on the top of the house, to conceal himself. The officer, finding admittance refused, went and fetched a magistrate and a blacksmith; the door was forced, and, on proceeding up stairs, *the woman was found hanging in her own bed-chamber.* The officer did not allow himself to be diverted from the pursuit by the sight of the corpse; he continued his search, and at length discovered the husband in his hiding-place. 'I arrest you!' cried the bailiff. 'I have no money!' replied the man. 'Then you must go to prison.' 'Let me at least bid my wife adieu!' 'It is not worth while waiting for that—your wife is dead! she has hung herself!' Now, M. * * * * (adds the journal we have quoted), what have you to say to that? You see we have merely copied your own statement upon oath, in which you have detailed all these frightful circumstances with horrible minuteness!"

The same journal also cites two or three hundred similar facts, of which the following may serve as a specimen:—"The expenses upon a note of hand for 300*f.* have been run up by the sheriffs' officers to 964*f.*; the debtor, therefore, who is a mere artisan, with a family of five children, has been detained in prison for the last seven months!"

The author of this work had a double reason for borrowing thus largely from the

pages of the "Pauvre Jacques." In the first place, to shew that the horrors of the last chapter are far below reality in their painful details. And secondly, to prove that, if only viewed in a philanthropic light, the allowing such a state of things to go on (namely, the exorbitant and illegal fees both demanded and exacted by certain public functionaries), frequently acts as a preventive to the exercise of benevolence, and paralyses the hand of charity. Thus, were a small capital of 1000*f.* collected among kind-hearted individuals, three or four honest, though unfortunate, artisans might be released from a prison and restored to their families, by employing the above-named sum in paying the debts of such as were incarcerated for amounts varying from 250 to 300*f.*! But, when the original debt is increased threefold by the excessive and illegal expenses, even the most charitable recede from the good work of delivering a fellow-creature, from the impression that two-thirds of their well-intentioned bounty would only go into the pockets of pampered sheriffs' officers and their satellites. And yet no class of unfortunate beings stand more in need of aid and charitable assistance than the unfortunate class we have just been speaking of.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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